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TOP 40

80S

Pop Artists

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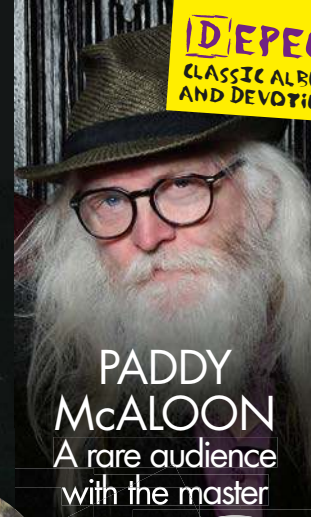
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Now whether you think that *Bros: After The Screaming Stops* was little more than a blatant stitch-up of the Goss twins is a moot point, the one thing I'm sure we can agree on is that it was great to see an 80s pop act stealing the headlines across the nation as we headed into 2019.

They say there's no such thing as bad publicity and, such is the way of things nowadays, the Goss boys could now find their careers revitalised in a way they never dreamed of when they first launched their comeback at the end of 2016.

We shouldn't be too surprised, of course, that an 80s pop act can supply us with an endless stream of quotable nuggets. If there's anything I've learned over the past three years at the helm of *Classic Pop* it's that the artists we feature in our magazine are a world removed from the anodyne, media-trained automatons that pass for modern chart stars these days.

This issue, look no further than songwriting genius and potential Dumbledore stand-in – the wonderful Paddy McAloon of Prefab Sprout – who grants us a very rare audience to shed light on his remarkable life in music and resilience in the face of extraordinary personal odds.

Elsewhere, we lock horns with Joe Jackson as the estimable

Renaissance man returns with top-notch new album *Fool* and a nationwide tour that celebrates his 40-year career.

Not that we're in the slightest bit mischievous but we expect this month's cover feature counting down the 40 most important acts of the 80s may stir up a little heated debate. We could have played it safe and based our choices on sales figures alone, but when exactly has that ever been a barometer of quality? Instead, this is *CP*'s very personal selection of those we think were the most consistently excellent of the decade. Please feel free to share your favourites with us, too, via social media.

As well as previewing the musical delights that are coming your way in the next 12 months, we also take one final retrospective celebratory look back at 2018 with our second Reader Awards. You voted in your thousands once again, so thank you for getting involved.

All in all, we hope our first issue of 2019 is the epitome of pop excellence. And, no, Matt Goss, that's not Latin for 'abstract'.

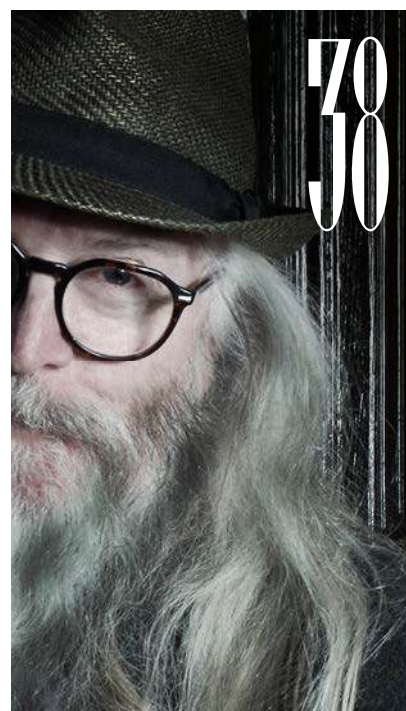
A stylized, handwritten signature of Steve Harnell in black ink.

Steve Harnell, Editor



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ULTIMATE



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THE LOWDOWN: SQUEEZE

Classic Pop's definitive guide to Deptford's finest tunesmiths

LADYTRON

We talk to the enigmatic synth-poppers about how their first album in seven years marks a return to their classic sound

2018 READER AWARDS

What were your pop highlights of 2018? You, the readers, have spoken

TANITA TIKARAM

The one-time teenage chart favourite talks to *Classic Pop* about her 30-year career and her memories of her bedsit classic debut, *Ancient Heart*

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Jackson is a true renaissance man. And in 2019 he's celebrating four decades of music-making

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Live It Up by Mental As Anything

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The London Boys' *The Twelve Commandments Of Dance*

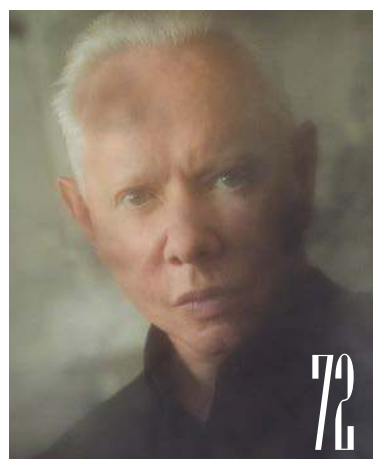
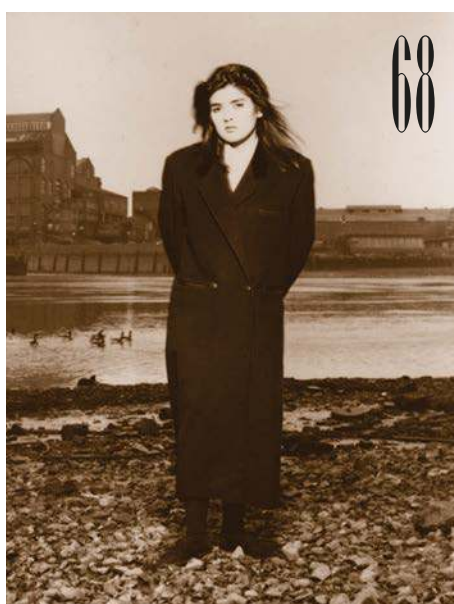
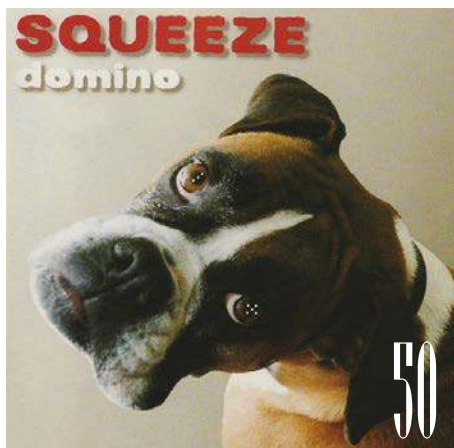
GODMOTHERS OF POP

Dido Florian Cloud de Bouneville Armstrong

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CLASSIC POP WHO'S WHO

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WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE 80s POP ACT?

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THE CHRISTIANS

SOUNDBITES

*1 "The first band I ever wrote about after I answered a classified advert in *Select* magazine for a fanzine in Beverly Hills back in the early 90s."

*2 "Unlike a lot of male-female duos, Eurythmics seemed to be a partnership of equals, both of them contributing different creative strengths to the finished product."

*3 "Who knew such a seemingly existentially bleak band had such life-affirming pop tunes under their greatcoats? Keep taking the tablets..."

*4 "They put their own uniquely stropky twist on every great left-field pop movement of the 80s, from post-punk to indie rock to acid house."

*5 "A remarkable career ripe for reappraisal that sinks from shaggy-topped glam to Moroder grooves and Roxy smoothness with Japan, into improvised solo adventures."

*6 "From my over-played copy of *Absolutely* to the first farewell at Madstock, introducing the kids to them at Camp Bestival (where they locked a grumpy Calvin Harris in a Portaloos) to the masterpiece of *The Liberty Of Norton Folgate* – I've loved them all the way."

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Best known for editing Teletext's music pages Planet Sound in the 2000s, **John Earls** has also written about pop for the *Sunday People*,

News Of The World, the *Daily Star* and the *NME*. This month, John counts down the top 80s pop artists for our cover feature and also nabs a very rare chat with Prefab Sprout's Paddy McAloon.



Wyndham Wallace is formerly a publicist, label representative and artist manager who has written for *Uncut* and *The Guardian*. His Travis documentary,

Almost Fashionable, was selected for the Edinburgh International Film Festival. For *Classic Pop*, Wyndham helms our new albums section and reviews Lily Allen's live show in Berlin.



Ian Gittins is a music writer for *The Guardian*, formerly of *Melody Maker* and *Q*. He is the co-writer of the best-selling autobiographies of Nikki Sixx, David Essex

and Shane Filan, among many more, and the author of *A Perfect Dream*, an illustrated history of the 40-year career of The Cure, which is out now. Ian brings us this month's reissues reviews section.

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	23 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY 2

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POP UP

Madonna pops Inn for New Year

The new year marked the first show of 2019 for Madonna. The star made a surprise performance at New York's historic LGBTQ venue, the Stonewall Inn on New Year's Eve. Footage posted by drag queen Vicky DeVille showed the Queen Of Pop singing an acoustic version of *Like A Prayer* to just 150 lucky revellers. Backed by her son David, she also sang a cover of Elvis Presley's *Can't Help Falling In Love* before urging the crowd to "be giants" in 2019, marking 50 years since the Stonewall riots.

However, it didn't all go quite to plan after fans started scrutinising pictures of Madonna's bottom at the event, accusing her of having butt implants. Madonna eventually visited Instagram to respond where she shared a close-up photo of herself, writing: "Desperately Seeking No One's Approval. And Entitled to Free Agency Over My Body Like Everyone Else!!"



MARR'S EMOTIONAL REPLAY



Johnny Marr has made his latest collaboration with The The available as a single. The guitarist was joined by Matt Johnson for a performance of The Lovin' Spoonful classic *Summer In The City* at his recent London show at the Roundhouse. It was the first time the pair have performed live together since Johnny's last gig as a member of The The back in 1993. "It's been great to record with Matt again and to play alongside his amazing voice," says Johnny. "The The is part of my life and we both always loved *Summer In The City*. We've made it our own." The single version of the track was recorded during soundcheck at the Roundhouse. Marr was a member of The The for the acclaimed albums *Mind Bomb* and *Dusk*, and last featured on The The's 2017 song, *We Can't Stop What's Coming*.



NEW ORDER
Movement

Lifting the lid on early days of New Order and Joy Division

New Order's debut album returns to vinyl as a very special boxset on 5 April. *Movement* reached No.1 on the indie chart when it was originally released in 1981 and the new version comes with four bonus 12" singles – original and re-recorded versions of *Ceremony*, plus *Everything's Gone Green* and *Temptation*, which were all released around the same period.

The *Movement* boxset will include the vinyl LP with its original iconic sleeve designed by Peter Saville, original album CD in replica mini album sleeve, a bonus CD of previously unreleased tracks, DVD of live shows and TV appearances, plus a hardback book all housed in a lift-off lid box.

Meanwhile, Joy Division aficionados will be able to get their hands on some unique items in March. Bassist Peter Hook is due to auction off his personal collection of band memorabilia including gems like a signed copy of debut EP, *An Ideal For Living*. Other notable items going under the

hammer include a replica of Ian Curtis' Vox Phantom guitar from the *Love Will Tear Us Apart* video and an Electro-Harmonix chorus pedal. But perhaps the choice souvenir from the lot – dubbed The Peter Hook Signature Collection – is a ticket to the Sex Pistols show at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall in 1976 where Hook and Bernard Sumner first conceived their band. Joy Division ended in 1980 following the death of frontman Ian Curtis and evolved into New Order. Hook left in 2007 and spent 10 years embroiled in a legal dispute which was finally settled in 2017.

© Nick Wilson



THE CHOICE SOUVENIR
FROM THE LOT IS A TICKET TO
THE SEX PISTOLS SHOW AT
MANCHESTER'S LESSER FREE
TRADE HALL IN 1976

GODMOTHERS of POP

— D I D O —

Long before Amy Winehouse discovered Tammi Terrell or Adele sat her GCSEs, another major British female vocal talent was breaking chart records. Dido Armstrong's incredible 1999 debut, *No Angel* shifted over 21 million copies and introduced the world to a new genre dubbed 'folktronica'. However, international stardom didn't sit well with her mellow demeanour and Dido soon stepped out of the limelight to focus on family. Now, after a five-year absence, the Londoner feels reinvigorated and is excited to release her fifth album, *Still On My Mind*, in March. Even more incredibly, she's about to embark on her first tour in 15 years. *Classic Pop* caught up with the humble singer to preview her beautiful new music and find out why it's taken so long.

How are you feeling about making a return to the stage?

I don't know how 15 years went past. I just think these songs feel good and like it's the right time for a celebration. We deliberately picked venues where I would like to see a show. It's done in a way that I will enjoy it. I don't love playing huge venues.

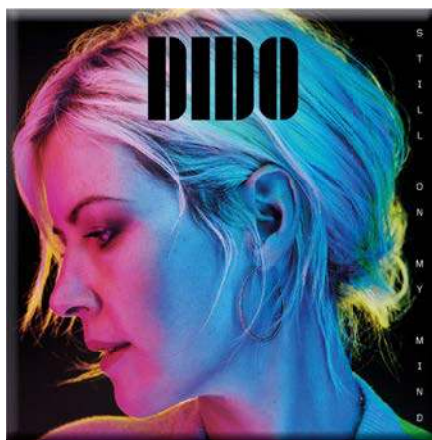
The first song you released from the new album is *Hurricanes* and it really encapsulates the new sound – sparse, ethereal and intimate.

I wanted to make it using electronic sounds, although not necessarily dance beats. I recorded the whole thing with my brother Rollo in an easy way, on the sofa at home.

You and Rollo have a great track record making albums together. What are the highs and lows of working with your brother?

There haven't been many lows on this one.

We're both quite opinionated about what we like, but we have to remember whose record it is sometimes! To be honest, this one has been all highs. In the past, we definitely had some lows about where or how songs should go, but on this one it's been fantastic. I got into this project because I just wanted to hang out with my brother and write some songs. I didn't need to sing them but then I started to and then it all sort of kicked off.



When did *Still On My Mind* really start to take shape?

There's one song that started the whole album. After I had my son, if I'm honest, everything I wrote for a few years after that was rubbish. Just because I write about conflict and little moments of light and dark, and there was no conflict. I loved him and there was nothing to say about that.

Then one day I thought, "I'm going to write a song about having a kid, then put it to one side so I get that out of my system." So I wrote this track and I'm really proud of it, it came out very naturally and it's just a little song about what it feels like for me to love someone in that way. Then, at that moment, the floodgates opened, suddenly the world became full of songs again.

So you fell back in love with music?

There's another new song called *You Don't Need A God* which is basically how I feel about music. Whether it's to be uplifted or accompany the day, music is a sort of religious feeling. I still get such a rush listening to music.

Do you recognise any parallels with this album and your debut, *No Angel*?

Yes, I suppose not having a record company, which was good. I didn't have one when I recorded *No Angel*, too. I was just doing this to see what happens, on my own, I wanted to decide what I did with it. Then being with Rollo, hanging out, with nobody watching, nobody caring... in a really nice way; it was completely liberating. *No Angel* was done in a lo-fi way during downtime whenever Faithless [her brother Rollo is one third of the electronica trio] left the studio; I came in to do my little bits. This had a similar vibe. Also the songs on this record are pretty personal and open. I was able to write like that because nobody was hearing it.

So you recorded it all at home?

Yeah, I realised I don't like vocal booths. We would say, "Let's just put this down so we remember it, then I'll do the proper vocal when we come back." But every time that ended up being the final vocal take, I never finished up recording any of it anywhere else.

Eventually you must have realised you wanted to release this music?

It's been a gradual process. When I signed to BMG, it felt really good and amazing to have that love and support again. Getting the writing back, I wasn't worried that I sort of lost it, but I feel so good about this record now. Just being with family has been everything. **Rudy Bolly**

● *Still On My Mind* is out on 8 March via BMG and Dido's UK/Irish tour visits Glasgow, Dublin, Manchester and London in May





No.49

LIVE IT UP

MENTAL AS ANYTHING

For a band renowned for offbeat pop songs with a swipe at Aussie life depicted therein, the one international success achieved by Mental As Anything was as straight as they come.

Live It Up, written by singer and keyboard player Andrew "Greedy" Smith, was an encouraging lyric for someone at the bottom of the pile to realise their worth and fight back. With a singalong chorus and backed by a sharp, electronic rock arrangement, it was an obvious hit.

Formed in Sydney in 1976, their early singles were titled *The Nips Are Getting Bigger* and *Possible Theme For A Future TV Drama Series*, establishing a satirical bent.

Live It Up, already a hit at home in 1985, featured on the *Crocodile Dundee* soundtrack a year later. The video had the band trying to entertain three geeky couples in a gawdy bar called FundaMental, but in the end only one couple's pet bloodhound – "with the sad face" – takes up Smith's offer of a dance.

In January 1987, it entered the UK charts at 98, peaking at No.3 six weeks later. Two follow-ups made the bottom end of the Top 100. They maintained their success in Australia and despite rows and line-up changes, two original members lead a version of the band today.

Matthew Rudd is the host of Forgotten 80s on Absolute 80s



Odyssey gets cutting-edge Blade treatment

Take That's forthcoming 30th anniversary tour, *Odyssey*, takes inspiration from sci-fi classic *Blade Runner*. The original movie was set in 2019 and it got the band thinking about their past and how they once envisaged their own future. Mark Owen explains: "We wanted something that explains the journey that we've been on. When we were growing up we were all watching films like *Blade Runner* and looking at what the future might be like. Now we're in it – because *Blade Runner* was set in 2019. I was even walking in London and thinking, 'It's all around us.'"

The *Odyssey* show promises to be their most visually spectacular yet and Gary Barlow told the *Daily Star*: "It's the big bit for us, the tour. We love it. It will be a big show. All the [album] artwork is a reflection of what we will be bringing to the stage. Because we haven't had a full new album to bring out this time, we've had more of a chance to think about the tour during the making of the record."

Before Christmas it was reported Take That had cancelled potential global tour plans due to a family illness, but that won't impact any of the 52 gigs around the UK and Europe that are kicking off in April.

BELINDA CELEBRATES RUNAWAY SUCCESS

Pop chanteuse Belinda Carlisle toasts another milestone in 2019. The singer's album *Runaway Horses* was released in 1989 so she's embarking on a massive 30th anniversary tour playing the LP in full. Belinda kicks off the celebrations with a gig at Singapore's Star Theatre on 6 April before moving onto Australia. Her first UK show will be at Audley End, Essex, on 12 July before a full UK tour kicks off on 21 September at Sage Gateshead. *Runaway Horses* was Belinda's third solo album and included the hits *Summer Rain*, *La Luna* and *Leave A Light On*. It also featured former Beatle George Harrison on guitar.



STRAY CATS



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POP QUIZ

- 1 Which member of Depeche Mode quit after the tour to promote *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*?
- 2 Eminem's *Stan* samples which song by Dido?
- 3 Name the sitcom based around the life of Danny Baker that Squeeze provided music for.
- 4 Tanita Tikaram's brother Ramon appeared in which 90s BBC drama about a group of solicitors?
- 5 Name the album Prefab Sprout released in 1997, their last on the Kitchenware label.
- 6 Which producer is reuniting with Madonna on the Queen Of Pop's forthcoming album?
- 7 What was Joe Jackson's first UK Top 20 hit in the singles chart?
- 8 Which Midlands city do The Specials hail from?
- 9 Kele Okereke is the frontman of which indie rock band?
- 10 Name the producer who co-wrote *Confusion* with New Order.
- 11 Which duo are returning in 2019, a decade after their last studio album, *Viva*?
- 12 What was Tracey Thorn's acclaimed autobiography from 2013 called?
- 13 Whose 1984 album was called *Teases & Dares*?
- 14 Johnny Marr collaborated with which actress on *The Priest*?
- 15 Which two musicians have replaced the departed Lindsey Buckingham in Fleetwood?

HOW DID YOU DO?

13-15 Einstein A Go-Go
10-12 Magic Touch
6-9 Alive and Kicking
0-5 Blue

FINAL FRONTIER FOR VANGELIS

Movie king Vangelis lifted the (piano) lid on his new album, *Nocturne*, on 25 January. The man behind a host of acclaimed film soundtracks has recorded a collection of soothing solo piano pieces, inspired by night-time and his long-held passion for space. "Music is science more than art, and it is the main code of the universe," says the 75-year-old Greek. There are also brand new versions of his iconic themes from *Chariots Of Fire* and *Blade Runner*. The album artwork features photography of the moon and fans can create their own versions by uploading their lunar pictures to an innovative new website vangelisnocturne.com.



Could Kylie embrace the Great Outdoors?

After Glastonbury, Kylie Minogue could be set to start her own festival. Following months of rumours, the Aussie finally confirmed she will perform Glasto's Sunday afternoon Legend slot on 30 June, the one previously made famous by Dolly Parton, Lionel Richie and Barry Gibb among many more. Playing to large crowds outdoors got Kylie thinking about launching her own festival, too. "It's interesting, I thought about doing my own event a few years ago but it went in the 'too hard' basket," she told the *Daily Star*. "But I've done outdoor shows since, like Hyde Park recently with Jason [Donovan] and Rick [Astley], which was brilliant. I'll leave the festivals to the experts for now but it could be fun in the future for sure."

Playing Glastonbury will certainly be "emotional" after Kylie was forced to cancel a headline set at Worthy Farm in 2005 after she was diagnosed with cancer. "It will be [14] years since I was originally meant to appear there and so much has happened up to now. I can't wait to see you all there to share this special show."

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LOST & FOUND



No.49 THE TWELVE COMMANDMENTS OF DANCE LONDON BOYS

Born just a fortnight apart, Dennis Fuller and Edem Ephraim went to school together in London and met again in Hamburg when they were in rollerblading troupes. Muscular and telegenic, they formed the London Boys and met mentor Ralf-René Maué, who wrote an entire album for them, released in July 1989.

The Twelve Commandments Of Dance combined relentless European pop beats with joyfully limited vocals. The highlight was *London Nights*, which had one of the finest choruses of the era and made No.2. Similarly camp, hi-NRG grooves on *El Matinero* and *Kimbalety*, fused with the pair's ease on the eye, earned them cross-gender appeal.

It fails when it tries to be deep; the beat slows down on *Chinese Radio* with Ephraim chanting rather than singing. Token ballad *Sandra* is awful, never getting out of first gear with an underproduced vocal, while *Wichita Woman* almost completely apes the chorus of opening hit *Requiem* without any of its sheen.

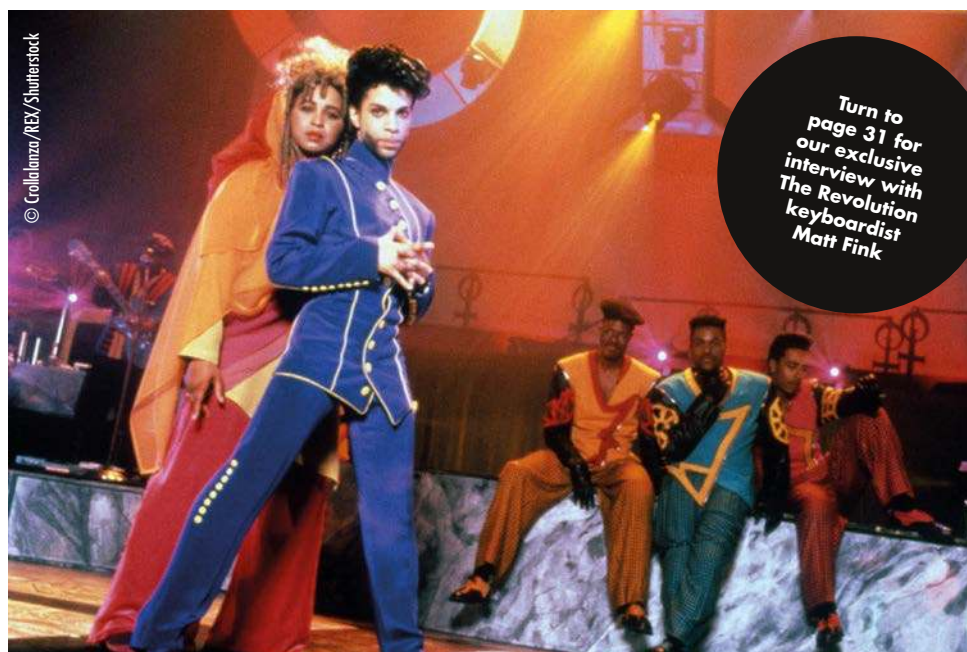
The LP went platinum, peaking at No.2. Two singles came out in the early 90s that missed the Top 40 and, after a break, the duo were relaunching themselves as purveyors of Christian dance music when they were killed in a car crash in 1996.

Matthew Rudd

POP UP

NINETIES STARS JOIN FORCES

Crack out the cargo pants and get practising the Running Man moves because the definitive We Love The 90s tour is coming to the UK. The ultimate 90s concert arrives next Christmas with a huge line-up of veteran chart-botherers including Snap!, Ace Of Base, Vengaboys, 2 Unlimited, Whigfield (pictured), Haddaway, DJ Sash, Rednex and many more. Expect to hear over 60 UK Top 10 ear-worms including *All That She Wants*, *No Limits* and *Saturday Night*, all kicking off in Leeds on 13 December, before visiting Birmingham, London, Glasgow and finishing in Manchester on 20 December. The 15 acts involved collectively sold over 120 million records.



Turn to
page 31 for
our exclusive
interview with
The Revolution
keyboardist
Matt Fink

Partying together for Prince

Prince's old bandmates are hoping to join forces for a mega Purple celebration one day. Morris Hayes of The New Power Generation believes the late funk legend would have enjoyed seeing his various backing bands team up for a special music festival. "I would love to play on the same bill with The Revolution," says Hayes. "I spoke to Prince, in around 1998, about holding a huge concert. It was when [early preparations for] 1999 New Year's Eve were coming up. I went, 'Dude, 1999 is going to be the biggest party ever in the history of the world. We've got to do the craziest gig ever for that, like at Madison Square Garden and have the show of all time. We could have 'Prince-apalooza' with all of the Prince family acts playing.' We could have had our own all-day festival with Prince topping the bill. That would have been the bomb. Sadly it didn't happen then and it never materialised when Prince was alive but I really hope that it can now, I think if we did something like that then everybody wins – all the artists and the fans."

Both The New Power Generation and The Revolution are currently touring separately in honour of their late band leader.

GODMOTHERS of POP

— TRACEY THORN —

Tracey Thorn has been making pop music in various guises since she was a teenager. While still in Marine Girls – a lo-fi post-punk outfit cited by Kurt Cobain as one of his favourite bands – she formed Everything But The Girl with Ben Watt. She has also released five solo albums, most recently 2018's *Record*, and has just published her third book, *Another Planet: A Teenager In Suburbia*, in which she revisits her formative years in a 1970s commuter town.

What was the impetus for writing *Another Planet*?

I was asked a while ago to contribute a short monograph to be part of a series of nature writing. The idea was that I would write something about the natural world – perhaps a landscape I had a connection with. I thought, “I can’t do that, I don’t know anything about nature.” Where I came from, there wasn’t really any landscape. And that got me thinking. I wondered whether in fact that in itself was the germ of an idea – turning my attention to the suburban landscape I knew so well.

What did you learn about your younger self in the process of writing the book?

The teenage me was quite a mercurial character. A bit of a drama queen. Desperate for excitement and thrills, and wanting something to be happening all the time – but also tortured by various anxieties. I wrote an awful lot about being bored and yet, reading my diaries, it all sounds quite action-packed. There was certainly a lot going on inside my head all the time.

Did writing diaries as a teenager go on to inform your lyric writing?

Yes, I think it did. In the early days, there



was a complete crossover – things that appeared in my diaries then appeared in songs. But it also just started the habit of writing things down, which is one I’ve never lost. My instinct, still, is to take notes, try to capture things in words, try to make sense of life – which is so complicated and uncontrollable – by expressing it.

When did music become a significant part of your life?

It was probably around 1977/78, when I started buying a lot of records, mostly singles, and began reading the music papers, especially the *NME*. But I think even before that, when I had only a handful of records, I used to listen to the radio a lot, and I got very emotionally attached to songs I liked. So perhaps it was always really important to me, even when it seemed like it was in the background.

How important was punk for you and, in particular, bands such as The Slits?

It was very important. And yes, the fact that

there were women involved meant that – as well as just buying records and going to gigs – there was the sudden possibility of actually joining in with this, buying a guitar, forming a band. It turned me from someone who felt very passive about her life, into someone extremely proactive, seizing control of what was going to happen, *making* things happen rather than waiting for someone to do it for me.

You formed your first band at the age of 17. Did it give you the chance to make your mistakes before you were in the public eye?

Oh no, I don’t think that’s how music works! I think you make mistakes all the time, at whatever stage. Or equally, you could say that nothing is a mistake, that it’s all important, and all part of what makes you what you are. I certainly didn’t learn anything about how to be famous or whatever, because you can’t learn that until it happens to you. And then you just have to deal with it.

What prompted the electronic direction of your recent solo album, *Record*?

It was partly the fact that the last music I’d made, for [acclaimed 2014 film] *The Falling*, was very acoustic and minimal. So I wanted to do something a bit more dancefloor-based this time – which, for me, means electronica. And also I was determined to make a record that was upbeat in mood, because mentally I was feeling, like a lot of people, so downhearted. So the idea was powerful lyrics about how you feel right now and grooves.

Do you have any musical projects coming up?

There are a couple of collaborations in the pipeline, neither of which I can tell you about, hahaha! **Oliver Hurley**

● *Another Planet: A Teenager In Suburbia* by Tracey Thorn is out now (Canongate, £14.99)



Cher unveils UK dates

It's been a long time coming but Cher has finally announced her first UK live dates in more than 14 years. The ageless star plays six dates in October as part of her Here We Go Again World Tour. "I'm very excited to bring this show to the UK," she says. "It's really my second home." Cher plays London's O2 Arena on 20-21 October followed by shows in Manchester (24 October), Birmingham (26 October), Glasgow (28 October) and Leeds (30 October). Incredibly, Cher still holds the UK record for the biggest selling single of all time by a female artist with *Believe*.



Oldman takes a tour

Gary Oldman has provided the narration for the new app based on the *David Bowie Is* exhibition. The Oscar-winning actor was a close friend of the singer and, in the app, takes visitors on a virtual tour of the sell-out exhibition which visited 12 countries packed full of Bowie artefacts.

"This brings the amazing *David Bowie Is* exhibition to a wider audience," said Oldman. "It's great that his fans get to experience it. It was a privilege to be involved."

More than two million people witnessed *David Bowie Is*, curated by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh. The Augmented Reality (AR) app is available for £7.99.



GEORGE SAILING INTO ROD TERRITORY

Rod Stewart is the unlikely source of inspiration for Boy George's career as the years pass by. The Culture Club star hopes to keep going as long as the gravelly-voiced Scot and explained: "To see him live was fabulous. What struck me was how much voice he still has. Hopefully, that will apply to me in 20 years' time. My voice is bigger today, it actually has more soul. It gives me the belief that I can sing for another 20 years."

But George refuses to turn Culture Club into a cheap nostalgia act: "As we go on stage, we can clearly sense the feeling that many people don't know what to expect. It's not a Culture Club concert like 20 or 30 years ago. I'm not embarrassed by my past and I don't want to edit the truth. But it's nice for once to talk about the present and the future. I can guarantee you that I do not want to be the person I was 30 to 35 years ago."



Giorgio's long-awaited live debut

The original super-producer Giorgio Moroder escapes the confines of his studio to embark on his first ever live tour later this year. The man who practically invented disco with Donna Summer's *I Feel Love* plays four UK concerts with a band beginning in Birmingham on 1 April followed by shows in London (2 April), Glasgow (4 April) and Manchester the following night. Giorgio said of his show, dubbed *A Celebration Of The Eighties*: "It is something I have always wanted to do. Fans kept reaching out to me, asking if I would ever do a real tour. Back in the day, it was unthinkable for producers to ever leave their studios. Today, DJ's and music producers have become the superstars of popular dance music."

The 78-year-old has enjoyed a renaissance since featuring on Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories* album. He has been performing as a DJ on the back of his 2015 *Déjà Vu* LP, which featured Kylie Minogue and Sia among others. Giorgio promises to play hits from his entire catalogue including soundtracks to *Electric Dreams*, *Midnight Express* and *The NeverEnding Story*.

A drum roll for Padgham

Producer extraordinaire Hugh Padgham will be honoured with the PPL-sponsored MPG Award For Outstanding Contribution To UK Music in London on 28 February. One of the UK's most successful producers of all time, he is perhaps most famous for creating the gated reverb drum sound that was used to such great effect by Phil Collins. Other accolades include work with The Police, Genesis, XTC, David Bowie, Hall & Oates and The Human League. MPG Executive Director Mick Glossop explained: "During the course of his stellar career in music production, Hugh has proved himself a very worthy recipient of the Music Producers Guild Award For Outstanding Contribution To UK Music. His work with such a wide selection of internationally respected artists shows his versatility as a producer. He has an incredible ability to interpret an artist's vision and help them create records that are successful on both a creative and commercial level. We are delighted to honour Hugh with this award in recognition of his work to date."

Padgham has taken a backseat to run his own studio in recent years, but in 2018 all of his Phil Collins and Genesis albums were re-released and he has also remastered David Bowie's album *Tonight* as part of the boxset, *Loving The Alien 1983-1988*.



LENNOX BREAKS SONGWRITING CURSE

Annie Lennox had given up calling herself a songwriter after failing to write a track for a decade, but the Eurythmics star had a breakthrough last year with *Requiem For A Private War* for the film *A Private War*, inspired by celebrated war journalist Marie Colvin. It earned Lennox a Golden Globe nomination and she revealed: "I was really drawn to write a song for Marie. I haven't written a song in years. I wasn't thinking of myself as a songwriter anymore. I was thinking, 'I am an advocate and campaigner for global feminism.' That is what I'm doing and that is my life's calling and, boom, all of a sudden, I get this invitation to write a song for Marie. I hadn't seen the film when I wrote the song, that's the other weird thing. I went almost immediately to my keyboard, sat down and played a few chords, and a line came to me. I envisaged something that does pertain to what you see in the film, which is so synchronistic and strange. What a privilege. I was so honoured to even have the opportunity. I was like, 'Marie, this is for you'. That was how I felt."

But Lennox songs aren't like buses so don't go expecting a follow-up soon. She told the *Daily Inquirer*: "I have written a song now, so I've done that. But do I want to continue? I don't know. What really makes my blood rush is being a global feminist. Being an advocate and a campaigner has been where my passion has been for many years now."





Almond says hello again

Fresh from waving goodbye to Soft Cell at London's O2 Arena in 2018, Marc Almond has announced another solo jaunt. Almond will perform songs from his entire career across the UK in May kicking off at Nottingham Royal Concert Hall on 6 May, then calling at Cambridge, Bath, Gateshead, Manchester and Birmingham. Speaking about his prolific output of late, Almond said: "When you're touring and working as much as I am, there comes a time when you have to be much more disciplined about yourself, otherwise you're just not going to make it, you're not going to last."



Big Mac and Nicks

Head down to a Lancashire branch of McDonald's and you could find Stevie Nicks serving fries later this year. Facebook users have started a random campaign trying to get the singer to work a shift at the Fleetwood branch of McDonald's; which almost shares its name with the legendary band. The event by 'Be Reef' urges Stevie to head to the Lancashire branch of the fast food chain and do a shift on 28 September. Lindsey Buckingham hasn't been approached but he may have free time on his hands since he was dumped from the band's line-up recently.

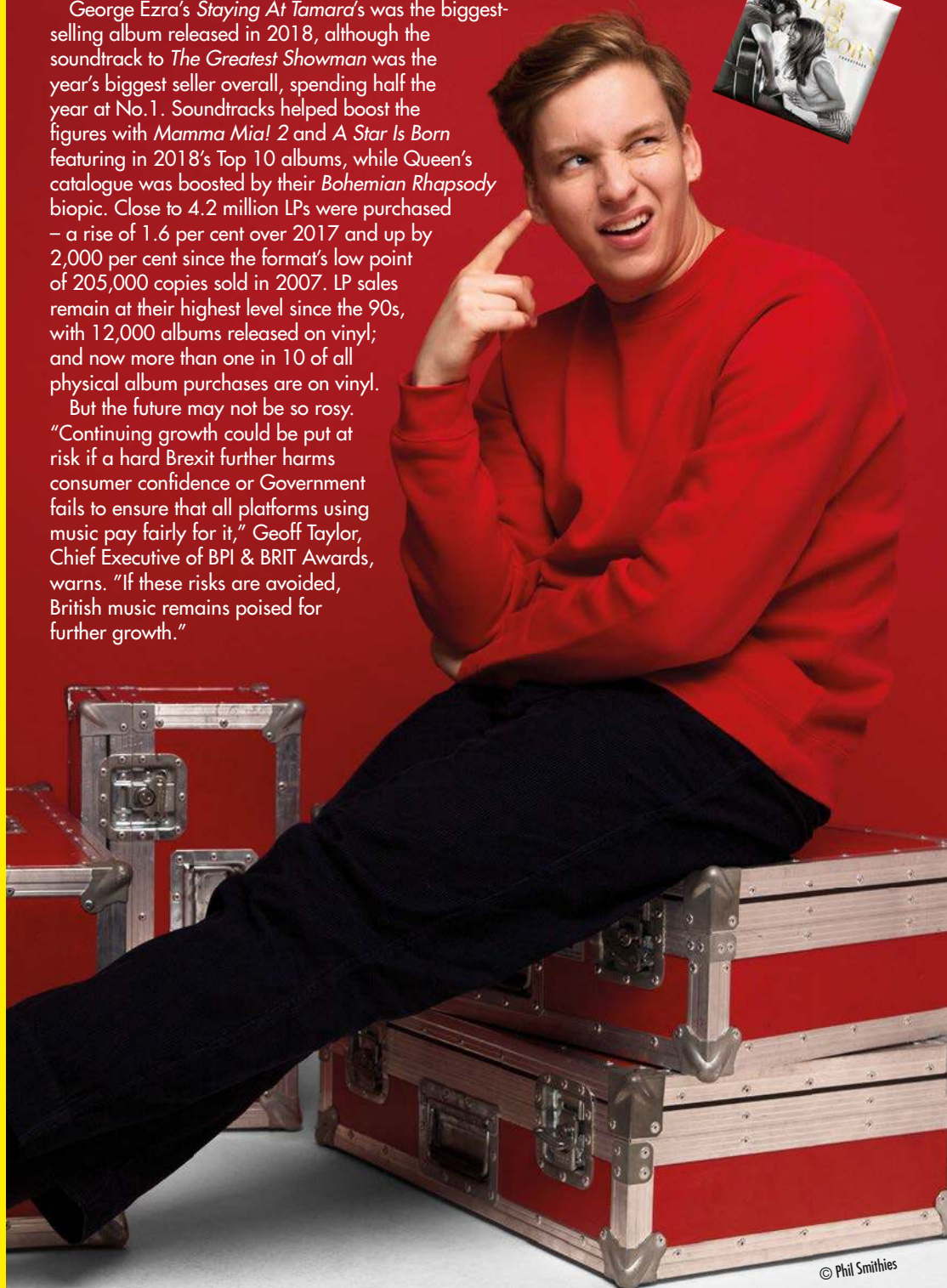
POP


Brit music shines before Brexit threat

UK music sales have risen yet again. According to the BPI, 2018 saw continuing growth in music consumption, driven largely by streaming, physical format resilience, success by British artists and the impact of music in movie soundtracks. A total of 142.9 million albums (or their equivalent) were either streamed, purchased and/or downloaded over the past 12 months – corresponding to a 5.7 per cent rise on 2017's 135.1 million figure.

George Ezra's *Staying At Tamara's* was the biggest-selling album released in 2018, although the soundtrack to *The Greatest Showman* was the year's biggest seller overall, spending half the year at No.1. Soundtracks helped boost the figures with *Mamma Mia! 2* and *A Star Is Born* featuring in 2018's Top 10 albums, while Queen's catalogue was boosted by their *Bohemian Rhapsody* biopic. Close to 4.2 million LPs were purchased – a rise of 1.6 per cent over 2017 and up by 2,000 per cent since the format's low point of 205,000 copies sold in 2007. LP sales remain at their highest level since the 90s, with 12,000 albums released on vinyl; and now more than one in 10 of all physical album purchases are on vinyl.

But the future may not be so rosy. "Continuing growth could be put at risk if a hard Brexit further harms consumer confidence or Government fails to ensure that all platforms using music pay fairly for it," Geoff Taylor, Chief Executive of BPI & BRIT Awards, warns. "If these risks are avoided, British music remains poised for further growth."





IAN PEEL'S A TO Z POP

— B IS FOR... BEST OF —

SOMETIMES THEY'RE A CASH-IN. AT OTHER TIMES, THEY'VE REBOOTED THE CAREER OF AILING ACTS. THEY CAN BE AFTER-THOUGHTS OR THEY CAN BE A BAND'S DEFINITIVE RELEASE. ALL HAIL THE BEST OF.

The traditional view of a Best Of is that it comes at the end of a group's career. One last final swipe at some sales (and some cash) before a split, or retirement. But sometimes a Best Of can boost the popularity of a group beyond all expectation.

In 1994, The Beautiful South was in a dark period. Fourth album *Miaow* had come and gone, as had vocalist Briana Corrigan. Their label, GO! Discs suggested a Best Of and the band couldn't have been less keen. But they plowed on with the project and released *Carry On Up The Charts* in November of that year, just in time for Christmas.

And, very quickly, it proved an interesting point: that while The Beautiful South had stopped being a 'singles band', they'd fallen down the cracks in becoming an 'albums band'. So when the world had the chance of consuming them both at once, they leaped at it.

By Christmas 1994, the album was No.1 and went on to go five-times platinum. It repositioned the group, gave them a sense of maturity and sold so many copies that, to quote a part-stat/part-urban myth, one in seven British households now owns a copy of *Carry On Up The Charts*.

Is there a definitive Best Of, the one by which all others should be measured? The Beatles set the agenda, as with most things, I would say. Although they've never actually released a Best Of, *per se*. At least not in the UK during the band's lifespan.

Instead, there's only ever been carefully curated compilations (which never came out under such



"The Beatles' first official UK hits compilation was 1966's *A Collection Of Beatles Oldies (But Goldies!)*, which bridged the gap between the rock 'n' roll era and psychedelia"

a downmarket title of *The Best Of The Beatles*). Their first official UK hits compilation was 1966's *A Collection Of Beatles Oldies (But Goldies!)*, which bridged the gap between the rock 'n' roll era and psychedelia, sitting between *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and featured new stereo remixes of many early tracks.

This was later followed by a pair

of double album gatefold-sleeved compilations released in the spring of 1973, entitled *1962-1966* and *1967-1970*. Or, as fans have since christened them, *The Red Album* and *The Blue Album*. Both of which are as important to the group's canon and story as anything, I would say.

What's your own personal favourite Best Of from the classic pop era? Four that spring instantly to my mind – that at least one in every seven households should own a copy of – are Madonna's *The Immaculate Collection*, Janet Jackson's *Design Of A Decade*, Bob Marley And The Wailers' *Legend* and Wings' *Wings Greatest...*

The 'career lull' turning point that led The Beautiful South to *Carry On Up The Charts* is not dissimilar to the circumstances that brought us the best-selling Best Of of all, at least from a UK artist or group. Queen's *Greatest Hits* arrived in October 1981 after the *Flash Gordon* soundtrack, an album which – by their standards – was a career low. It had only peaked at No.10 and broke a seven-strong run of Top Five albums.

So they picked the momentum back up with *Greatest Hits*. And if the group's recent success in the cinema seems big, it's a drop in the ocean compared to their first and best Best Of – 25 million copies sold to date, 833 weeks on the UK album chart... the stats are just phenomenal. And, as the Queen legend continues to grow (partly critically, partly self-propelled), it will only go on selling. With Side One kicking off with *Bohemian Rhapsody* and Side Two closing out with *We Are The Champions*, it's hard to think of a Best Of that could ever outdo it. ■

THIS MONTH IN...

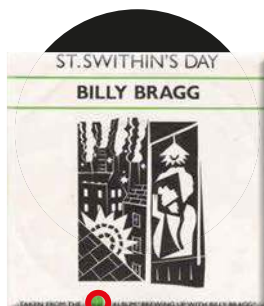
POP

FEBRUARY 1985

IN OUR ROUND-UP OF FEBRUARY 1985'S BIGGEST MOMENTS IN POP, WHITNEY RELEASES HER DEBUT ALBUM, SINÉAD O'CONNOR GIGS WITH TON TON MACOUTE AND THE SMITHS TOP THE CHARTS

JOHNNY BLACK

It is reported that Billy Bragg is advising fans not to buy his first single, *St. Swithin's Day/A New England*, because it is being brought into the UK as an import costing around £2.50 – a mere £1.49 less than his *Brewing Up With Billy Bragg* current LP which includes the first track.



Whitney Houston releases her eponymous debut album on Arista Records in the US.

Arista mogul Clive Davis had first seen Whitney two years earlier during a nightclub show in New York, then signed her to the company on 10 April 1983, when

she was just 19, and began masterminding her transformation into a global superstar. It's hardly surprising then that Davis later declared: "Whitney had an incredible gift and power as a performer. She was the greatest singer of her era."

However, getting to the point of releasing her

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10 • 11 • 12 • 13 • 14 • 15 • 16 • 17 • 18 •



On their Happy In Flares tour, Doctor And The Medics play at The London School Of Economics.



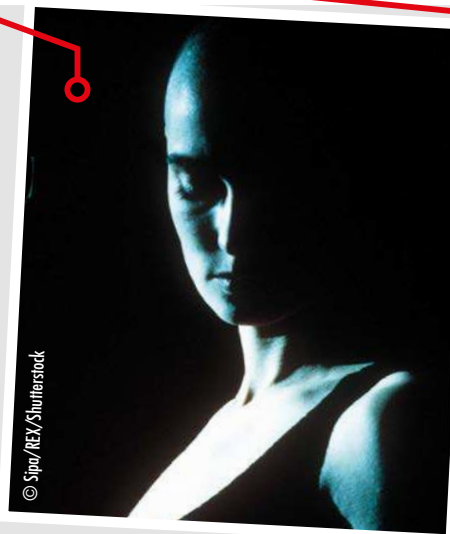
Ed Koch, mayor of New York City, announces that *New York, New York* by Frank Sinatra has been adopted as the official musical anthem of the city.



The RIAA certifies U2's *The Unforgettable Fire* album as a platinum disc, the band's first in the US.

Irish band Ton Ton Macoute plays in the Purty Loft in Dún Laoghaire, despite the fact that their 18-year-old vocalist, Sinéad O'Connor, has attended her mother's funeral earlier in the day.

Years before O'Connor's tortured personality became public property, she was a hard-grafting singer with the Dublin-based acoustic funk band Ton Ton Macoute. Claiming to have suffered violent abuse from her parents, Sinéad and the rails had parted company by the time she was 15, when she was committed to a religious "training centre" for 18 months after incidents of shoplifting and truancy. Playing music became her salvation and, after joining Ton Ton Macoute in 1984, it quickly became evident that her astonishing voice was its strongest element. On this memorable night, she went on stage with the band within hours of attending the funeral. "She began by introducing the band and then, quietly and indistinctly, 'This is dedicated to someone who I wish could see me now,' before launching into *Boa*," revealed the



band's co-founder Columb Farrelly, in Dermott Hayes' 1991 book *Sinéad O'Connor: So Different*. "Her banshee wailing would take over when she had forgotten a lyric and she'd turn to us with a shrug of apology. Anybody who might have dropped by casually not knowing what to expect will never have forgotten that gig." It was while playing with Ton Ton Macoute that she was brought to the attention of Ensign Records, who signed her to a solo deal later in 1985.



described working with Whitney on the LP as: "One day, you're driving a Dodge Dart and then you get into the driver's seat of a Ferrari."

Another, Narada Michael Walden, added: "Whitney was just so confident and happy. I realised I was really dealing with a brand-new model of sound and energy for the future of music."

Yet despite stand-outs including *Saving All My Love For You* and *How Will I Know*, the album didn't immediately fly off the shelves until *You Give Good Love* rocketed into the Billboard Hot 100 in May, followed in October by *Saving All My Love For You*. The singles would be the first of Houston's many chart-toppers, driving the album towards eventual worldwide sales of more than 22 million.

debut album took a further two years and a recording budget that rocketed from an initial \$200,000 to almost \$400,000, with Davis determined to find exactly the right songs and the perfect team to produce the record. One of those producers, Kashif Saleem,

© Idols/Photoshot



It is reported that Orange Juice has split up following the failure of their single, *What Presence*. Frontman Edwyn Collins is planning a solo career, and drummer Zeke Manyika is still signed to Polydor Records.

At the Jackson family home in Encino, California, Michael Jackson assists in the birth of a baby deer to his pair of pet deers, Prince and Princess. As the baby is born on Valentine's Day, he names it Valentino.

19 • 20 • 21 • 22 • 23 • 24 • 25 • 26 • 27 • 28



Careless Whisper becomes the second Wham! single to hit No.1 in the US Billboard Chart, although it's essentially a George Michael solo track.

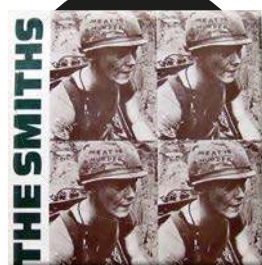
As part of a series of GLC-sponsored concerts for the unemployed, The Cocteau Twins play at York Hall in Bethnal Green, London. Tickets cost £1.50 on production of a UB40 registration card from the Department Of Employment, thus verifying unemployed status.

The Stranglers bring their British tour to an end with the first of five nights at The Dominion Theatre in London.

Elton John and Tina Turner are the guests on the first ever edition of TV chat show *Wogan*, hosted by Terry Wogan.



The Smiths top the UK album chart for the first and last time with *Meat Is Murder*.



TOP FIVE UK MUSIC VIDEOS

COMPILED BY
VIDEO WEEK
2 FEBRUARY

1 THE VIDEO WHAM!



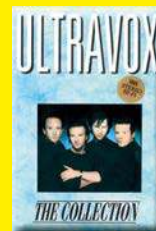
2 DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS? BAND AID



3 THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME LED ZEPPELIN



4 THE COLLECTION ULTRAVOX



5 VIDEO REWIND THE ROLLING STONES



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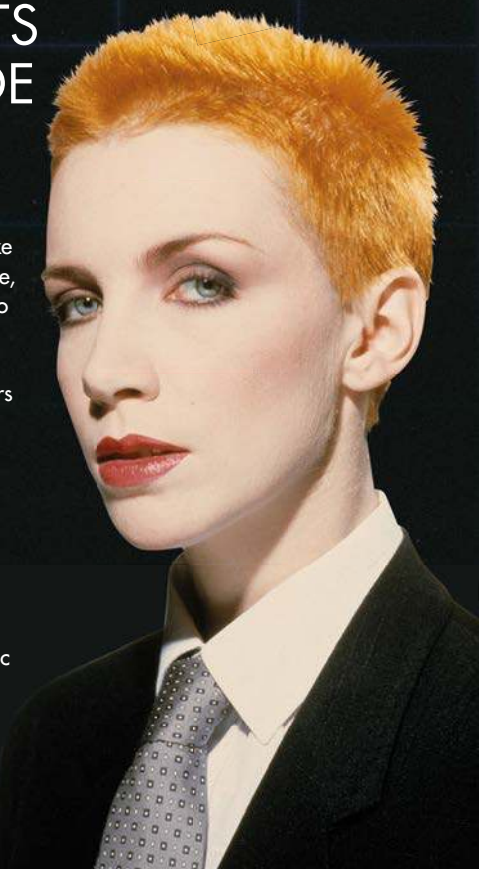
TOP 40

80s

Pop Artists

IT'S THE ULTIMATE POP FACE
OFF AS WE COUNT DOWN
THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTS
OF OUR FAVOURITE DECADE

JOHN EARLS



It is, of course, the impossible task: distil music's most creative and varied decade down to a mere 40 artists. The *Classic Pop* team has only just finished wiping the blood away caused by the fights creating such a list entails, but we reckon we've got the 1980s covered here.

Everyone has favourite artists that we couldn't find room for. What do you mean, no Orange Juice, Nick Heyward or Kajagoogoo? But who from this selection could you possibly ignore? Our criteria was simple

but strict: if you essentially broke through in the 70s – like Blondie, Talking Heads and Elvis Costello – you were out. However, we've briefly alluded to some established artists whose careers got a much-needed shot in the arm during the 80s thanks to some landmark albums. Acts more suited to a rockist publication are also out, so no Def Leppard or Guns N' Roses. There are other magazines for that sort of thing. Instead, let's celebrate the colourful, eccentric and varied world of the finest pop of the 80s. What an incredible playlist it makes...



40

KIM WILDE

● Marty's eldest daughter is such a friendly staple of daytime TV and (thanks to her other passion) gardening shows, it's easy to overlook just how huge she was, with 19 Top 40 singles. Massive in America, too, Kim supported Michael Jackson on the Bad tour, while her recent Top 30 album *Here Come The Aliens* proved Kim is still no slouch at energetic power-pop.



39

DIRE STRAITS

● When they weren't popularising CDs thanks to the pristine sheen of *Brothers In Arms*, at the time Dire Straits seemed an austere and somewhat workmanlike presence among the 80s riot of colour. But their imperious yacht rock has aged better than many contemporaries. Of all the bands yet to reform, they'd probably sound the most dignified if they did.



38

A-HA

● Morten Harket's lethally sharp cheekbones and the glossy *Take On Me* video meant A-ha should have been as disposable as any boyband. Instead, they're still creating stadium-sized melancholia over 30 years later. A precursor to 90s Scandipop, they're still not given the credit their luxurious pop deserves – possibly because Morten is still so distressingly handsome, the swine.



37

JANET JACKSON

● Janet could easily have been written off as Michael's annoying kid sister, one Jackson too many. But if you're fronting industrially-tooled R&B and promoting the deliciously filthy side of pop her brother was seemingly too asexual to convince with, who cares who your siblings are? Pretty much Britney Spears' whole career was taken from the robofunk of *Nasty*.

"Janet Jackson could easily have been written off as Michael's annoying kid sister, one Jackson too many"



TOP 5 ALBUMS – THE CAREER RENAISSANCE

**01 DIANA ROSS**

DIANA, 1980

In the fallout from the "Disco sucks!" movement, Nile Rodgers was out to prove himself again. It benefitted Ms Ross: *Upside Down* and *I'm Coming Out* were the opposite of suck.

**02 QUEEN**

THE WORKS, 1984

Lesser bands would have folded after the failure of synth experiment *Hot Space*. Freddie Mercury's confidence instead meant Queen returned with a career high, just in time for Live Aid.

**03 DAVID BOWIE**

LET'S DANCE, 1983

Another Nile Rodgers production, giving Bowie his greatest pop hits. It made David bigger than ever, ensuring his career could absorb the relative failures of his subsequent 80s work.

**04 THE STYLE COUNCIL**

CAFÉ BLEU, 1984

The Jam split at their peak, which left the restless Paul Weller to return with one of pop's most unexpected career changes. For a time, The Style Council were a soulful triumph.

**05 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**

BORN IN THE USA, 1984

Yes, many listeners misread the cautionary *Born In The USA* as unalloyed patriotism. If it meant someone as powerful as Bruce Springsteen graduated to stadiums then, frankly, who cares?



36

JAPAN

David Sylvian's refusal to engage with his past means Japan's legend has faded. It shouldn't: even now, it's still impossible to fully grasp the real meanings of their complex, grandiose material. Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet were so in awe of the music the Catford-birther band smuggled into the Top 40 that they threw parties to celebrate their rival splitting up.



35

GENESIS/ PHIL COLLINS/ PETER GABRIEL

Genesis going from their prog period to *Invisible Touch* in a decade was the equivalent of Radiohead getting DJ Khaled to produce their next album. Phil Collins somehow found time to pioneer the blokey confessional album with *Face Value*, while Peter Gabriel went poppier than his old mates on the day-glo world of *Sledgehammer*.



34

R.E.M.

As prolific as their friends in The Smiths, the difference was that R.E.M. carried on being magnificent for ages. Arriving fully-formed with the mysterious *Murmur*, by the end of the 80s R.E.M. were a fully-fledged arena powerhouse thanks to *Green*. Only Arcade Fire and The National have come close to rivalling them as North American college rock kings.



33

U2

You'd have got pretty long odds on U2 being the biggest band in the world at the start of the 80s. Seemingly through the sheer scope of their ambition, they knuckled down and realised exactly what the world demanded – and promptly served up indestructible anthems by the yard. Having got stellar, they went Year Zero on their career, but that's for another decade...

TOP 5 LPs – HIP-HOP



01 N.W.A

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON, 1988

Giving the world both Dr Dre and *Fuck Tha Police*, N.W.A's important message was backed up with equally powerful music. Years later, it still sounds like nothing else out there.



02 BEASTIE BOYS

PAUL'S BOUTIQUE, 1989

Instead of playing up to the cartoon brattish stereotypes that made *(You Gotta) Fight For Your Right (To Party)* a tabloid-baiting staple,

Beastie Boys pioneered sampledelia and started on their path as hip-hop's playful mystics.



03 NENEH CHERRY

RAW LIKE SUSHI, 1989

The jazz lineage of Neneh Cherry's father Don was there in the shifting, playful grooves of her debut album. Even now, new listens reveal fresh

joys in Neneh's twisting, twisted music.



04 DE LA SOUL

3 FEET HIGH AND RISING, 1989

A restorative among gangsta rap's politicised fury, De La Soul were able to calm hip-hop down again, inventing a whole new world in the process. A perfect example of music as mental therapy.



05 SALT-N-PEPA

HOT, COOL & VICIOUS, 1986

As much as *Push It* remains a classic party starter, Salt-N-Pepa's place as groundbreaking women in hip-hop is overlooked. That's doubly curious given the power of what else they had on offer.



28

THE ASSOCIATES

An operatically-voiced gay guy singing defiantly abstract disco about social anxiety? Only in the 1980s could The Associates have become crossover stars. With Billy Mackenzie's stratospheric voice, their songs could have coasted. Instead, via the gloriously strange *Party Fears Two* and *Club Country*, Alan Rankine crafted drama worthy of his bandmate.



27

ABC

Yes, Trevor Horn's production on *The Lexicon Of Love* was wonderful. But it would have been nothing without songs injected with Oscar-worthy drama. The rest of ABC's decade – the rockist *Beauty Stab*, back to silky soul and still finding time for proto-house – badly needs reassessing, too. And *Poison Arrow* has the best spoken-word section of any pop song.

"Genesis going from their prog period to *Invisible Touch* in a decade was the equivalent of Radiohead getting DJ Khaled to produce their next album"



32

TEARS FOR FEARS

○ Precious few bands are capable of drawing on Jungian philosophy while creating stone-cold bangers, but precious few bands managed to distil the differing volatile temperaments of Curt Smith and Roland Orzabal long enough for them to be so cohesive. There are too few Tears For Fears songs out there, but what we're gifted with is usually sublime.



31

LUTHER VANDROSS

○ Soul music generally went mad in the 80s, waylaid by the rise of hip-hop and feeling the effects of the decade's anything-but-soulful synthetic production techniques. Some talents were able to rise above. Learning his craft as a backing singer for David Bowie and Diana Ross, once he was allowed the spotlight, Luther's seductive voice truly shone.



30

THE POLICE

○ Sting has been a caricature for so long, it's easy to forget just how inventive The Police were. Swallowing up stadiums via songs as downright sinister as *Every Breath You Take* is impressive, as is the way they graduated to stardom without losing the intensity of three people who plainly hated each other. Like The Jam, they knew exactly the right moment to split.



29

BANANARAMA

○ They might not have quite been the original girlband, but they certainly set the template on how the Spice Girls to Little Mix operate: make being in a pop group look the most fun imaginable, while ensuring you've got the best tunes on the block. The fervour surrounding Siobhan Fahey rejoining showed how much Bananarama still matter to people.

"As Boy George told *Classic Pop* recently, just the sight of Culture Club – a mixed-race band fronted by a flamboyantly-dressed gay singer – was a statement in itself"



26

EURYTHMICS

○ Eurythmics were determined to make memorable videos, and their various images are so iconic it's almost overshadowed how consistent the music was. Annie Lennox simply had to be a star, while Dave Stewart is one of the best grafters in music. That's not an insult: it's harder to write a hit single than a freeform jazz odyssey. Together, they were unstoppable.



25

DEPECHE MODE

○ Set to be pure-pop titans with Vince Clarke, once he left Martin Gore ensured Depeche Mode became a far more deviant proposition. Uniting misfits with an outsiders' worldview and doomy anthems, they weren't a band so much as a way of life: it's been that way ever since. Even without Depeche's dark carapace, you're left with an arsenal of bangers.



24

YAZOO/ALISON MOYET/ERASURE

○ Like a non-evil Simon Cowell, Vince Clarke knows how to spot a star: first, he kickstarted Alison Moyet's career with Yazoo and then did it all over again with Andy Bell. Alison thrived on her own, while Erasure are still a force for good. Why hasn't anyone erected a statue in his honour?



23

CULTURE CLUB

○ As Boy George told *Classic Pop* recently, just the sight of Culture Club – a mixed-race band fronted by a flamboyantly-dressed gay singer – was a statement in itself. Their music was just as important: classic soul tales of forbidden love with an added pop twist which sent them stellar. Too intense to last at the time, it's impossible not to cheer on their comeback.





22

THE CURE

They happened to thrive in the 1980s, but The Cure would be fantastically *other* no matter when their music was created. The Cure are The Cure: it's one of the great unwritten rules of pop music. And, let's be clear, they make pop music, not rock music: Robert Smith is too in love with melody and experimentation to be anything as dull as a rock singer.



21

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Two of the decade's biggest singles had videos involving watersports and nuclear war. Hurray! What the band bought was insouciant cool (Paul Rutherford), a belief that pop could be about anything (Holly Johnson) and a devilment that they were getting away with it (the other three, aka The Lads). It didn't last, but good lord, *what* a debut album.



20

TALK TALK

Were Talk Talk ever actually real? No, honestly: their fourth album, 1988's *Spirit Of Eden* is such an out-there masterpiece that it couldn't have been made by regular people. Mark Hollis retired 20 years ago and has shown no signs whatsoever of returning. The myth of Talk Talk is the most enigmatic in pop, primarily because their music lives up to the mystery.



19

MADNESS

It's true that Madness' albums weren't generally as strong as their hits, but labelling them "a singles band" shouldn't be an insult. You try writing era-defining songs as joyful as *Our House*, *Driving In My Car* and *House Of Fun* and then you can carp about filler tracks. Moreover, since their return, the albums have been fantastic, too. You didn't make *Baggy Trousers*. Madness did.



18

KYLIE MINOGUE

The ultimate Stock, Aitken Waterman creation and so much more, Kylie should have had one album and scarpered like every other soap star. Instead, here she is, more than 30 years later, still perfectly popangular. Nobody else developed from the SAW factory went on to be bigger: some singers really are just born to be pop stars.



17

SOFT CELL

Even in a decade of deviants, Soft Cell are the ultimate example of smuggling a dark heart into the mainstream. Marc Almond is right that he and Dave Ball should have written more pop songs, but *The Art Of Falling Apart* and *This Last Night In Sodom* are perfect outsider art. Dave is right to claim Depeche Mode essentially stole their career when Soft Cell split.

"Here Kylie is, more than 30 years later, still perfectly popangular. Nobody else developed from the SAW factory went on to be bigger."

TOP 5 LPs – SOUL



01 ALEXANDER O'NEAL

HEARSAY, 1987

The ultimate Cab Drive FM favourite, it's physically impossible to hear Alexander O'Neal and not feel relaxed. *Criticize* and *Never Knew Love Like This* are peak smooth #feelings.



02 LIONEL RICHIE

DANCING ON THE CEILING, 1986

Lionel Richie segued effortlessly from The Commodores to an even bigger solo career, but of course he made it look easy. Effortlessness is what his music exemplified throughout the 80s.



03 SIMPLY RED

A NEW FLAME, 1989

Mick Hucknall's queasy lothario image made it easy to forget the music which made him Rod Stewart's heir. If he didn't look as he does, Mick would be recognised as a soul great.



04 SOUL II SOUL

CLUB CLASSICS VOL. ONE, 1989

Jazzie B merged classic soul's spirit with the new aural palette of rave to create a groundbreaking, distinctly British flavour.

Helped by Caron Wheeler's sumptuous voice, they were hugely inventive while reassuringly familiar.



05 SHALAMAR

FRIENDS, 1982

Riding the tail-end of disco and ushering it back into the bedroom, Shalamar could have been left behind in the 80s. But they had far too many huge tunes like *A Night To Remember* to ignore.



16

THE STONE ROSES

● The Stone Roses weren't the purest example of rave culture, but the scene saved them from getting stuck as the unpromising goths they started out as in 1985. Three years on, they had one of the all-time great rhythm sections, a spectacular guitarist and a messianic singer holding it together. When their eponymous debut album arrived in 1989, the 1990s began.



15

THE HUMAN LEAGUE

● Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh quit after The Human League's first two albums flopped. Heaven 17 were great, and everyone assumed Phil Oakey was a spent force, especially when his big idea was recruiting two singers he'd seen dancing in a club. The result? The *Dare* album and its passably successful single *Don't You Want Me*. That's how you get revenge.

"The Stone Roses weren't the purest example of rave culture, but the scene saved them from getting stuck as the unpromising goths they started out as in 1985"



14

KATE BUSH

● Like Robert Smith, Kate Bush would be the same in 1920 or 2020 as when she happened to float into existence with *Wuthering Heights*. Never has someone taken such a languorously perfectionist approach to their music, while simultaneously plainly not giving a stuff what anyone else thinks of it. It makes her an incredibly powerful presence, and her music utterly timeless.



13

THE SPECIALS

● New album *Encore* is one of the all-time great comebacks, but that shouldn't be a surprise: everything The Specials do is a sign of total commitment and integrity. Their role as one of the UK's first crossover multiracial bands was politically important; songs as intense and provocative as *Ghost Town* and *Too Much Too Young* more than lived up to that pioneering status.

TOP 5 LPs – INDIE



01 THE HOUSEMARTINS

LONDON O HULL 4, 1986

Eccentric, political, hugely infectious, The Housemartins were so energetic they couldn't last: Paul Heaton did it all over again with The Beautiful South and Norman Cook's groove served him well, too.



02 LLOYD COLE & THE COMMOTIONS

RATTLESNAKES, 1984

Buxton-born Lloyd Cole was a master of bedsit disco. Folky enough that he'd have thrived in any era, Cole's literate wit was perfect next to his 80s peers.



03 SCRITTI POLITTI

CUPID & PSYCHE 85, 1985

The songwriters' songwriter, Green Gartside rivals Paul McCartney for making timeless pop sound the easiest thing in the world. Nowhere is that better realised than this succulent collection.



04 THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN

PSYCHOCANDY, 1985

Jim and William Reid stopped hitting each other long enough to invent feedback rock. Beneath the fuzz and fighting, the Reids packed some mighty tunes, with their gigs a guaranteed riot in every sense.



05 PREFAB SPROUT

STEVE McQUEEN, 1985

Paddy McAloon's gift for writing 10 great pop songs before breakfast met his ideal curator in Thomas Dolby's production polish. Rarely has music been so welcoming and downright huggable.



12

SPANDAU BALLET

● From the forefront of club culture on *Journeys To Glory* to timeless stadium ballads with *Through The BarriCades* in just five years, Spandau Ballet's heartthrob image overshadowed what a varied songwriter Gary Kemp is. Immense multi-genre anthems, and such a sharp fashion sense that even David Bowie copied their look: what else do you want from a band?



11

THE SMITHS

● Far more than mining misery, Morrissey's scabrous wit was matched every step by Johnny Marr's melodic powers. Their dignity in refusing to reform means the brutal power of The Smiths' live shows has been largely forgotten. That Morrissey has been so serially unpleasant over the past few years means that many fans no longer want a reunion. That's heartbreaking.



10

PET SHOP BOYS

One of the most distinctive voices in music, unrivalled attention to detail, endless array of killer lyrics, subsuming club culture into titanic pop songs when they're not crafting heart-stopping ballads... Ever since *West End Girls* introduced them to the world, Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe have shown the importance of pop, without ever overstating the fact.



09

PUBLIC ENEMY

Their riotously powerful music would have been enough to earn their place here. That they were a genuine cultural phenomenon, too, means Public Enemy's influence has lasted longer than any other peer. Mainstream USA was right to be scared of them: after Public Enemy, sectors of American society's downtrodden finally had a voice. And what a voice.



08

NEW ORDER

Overcoming the tragedy of Ian Curtis' death, Joy Division emerged just as strong with their new identity. A proper band, four strong personalities were reflected in mixing dance music with a melancholic undertow. The best-selling 12" of all-time in *Blue Monday*, one of the greatest videos in *True Faith* and possibly the best ever B-side with the majestic *1963*: they made it all look a blast, too.

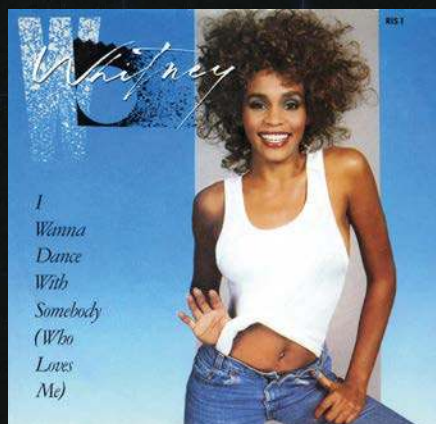
"Duran Duran didn't become the decade's biggest stars just because John Taylor was always *Smash Hits*' Most Fanciable Male (though it helped)"



07

DURAN DURAN

In a decade that ultimately saw the rise of the solo singer, Duran Duran were the ultimate 80s band. They didn't become its biggest stars just because John Taylor was always *Smash Hits*' Most Fanciable Male (though it helped). For a band so ginormous, *Rio* and *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* were, at their core, both immensely poppy and powerfully strange albums.



06

WHITNEY HOUSTON

Whitney Houston's skyscraping voice gave birth to an over-singing am-dram vocal style that's still distressingly prevalent. It wasn't Whitney's fault that her successors entirely missed the point: Whitney could properly sing, and nobody since her has been able to capture the sheer joy present in every note of *I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)* and *How Will I Know*.



05

ADAM ANT

"Ridicule is nothing to be scared of" summed up the message of 80s music: no matter how strange you are, you too could be a huge pop star. That was typified by Adam Ant's own rise: a seemingly washed-up punk at the start of the decade, within 18 months he was Britain's biggest pop star. He did it with colour, style and songs that sounded like hurricanes.



04

MICHAEL JACKSON

With just two albums, Michael Jackson was the decade's biggest personality. Fifteen of his 19 album tracks in the 80s were singles, every one of them massive – beat that for quality control. Every aspect of his image was worthy of university degree courses, while his tours remain the standard for stadium theatrics. For a decade, Michael knew exactly how to use his golden voice.

01
PRINCE

Prince is possibly the only bona fide genius in 1980s music. How else to explain just how gifted he was as a singer, guitarist, songwriter, performer and style icon? He was certainly the most prolific songwriter, releasing his own albums at such a prodigious rate that Warner could barely keep up with him, while finding time to donate songs to others which would have been the best in many artists' whole careers: *I Feel For You*, *Manic Monday*, *Nothing Compares 2 U*... and that's before examining the mythical piles of unreleased songs Prince insisted remain in his vaults which are only now beginning to surface.

So, sure, Prince could write – and there couldn't have been anyone better to perform his songs than Prince And The Revolution either. Nobody better captured raw, crackling sex better, whether he was being explicit or seemingly playful like *Kiss*. He transcended genres, because while he excelled at pop, rock, R&B and soul, he was always Prince, superior to any boundaries. Prince's career had the occasional misfire, like his *Graffiti Bridge* film, but that was irrelevant because something brilliant would follow before you knew it.

Prince was locked in a space race with Madonna, David Bowie and Michael Jackson in the 80s to see who would have the greatest live show. For performance, Prince won: it was in concert that fans were reminded that here was possibly the greatest guitarist of his generation as well as its finest songwriter. No wonder Prince rarely spoke: decades on, us mere mortals are still trying to fathom out how he managed it all.



03

GEORGE MICHAEL/WHAM!

As shuttlecocks-down-the-shorts cheesy as Wham! looked, it was soon obvious that their music was sturdier than boyband fodder, with George Michael's songs full of fun and lust. Wham! had a yearning, too, which George developed once he couldn't go any further creatively with Andrew Ridgeley. Put all of that together, and *Faith* was the perfect debut solo album.



02

MADONNA

Far from the greatest singer or songwriter, Madonna exemplified control: putting the right team in place to deliver an endless stream of fantastic singles. Madonna always looked fantastic, and her live shows helped reinvent what was possible in stadium pop's first era. You could say Madonna invented Girl Power before the Spice Girls, but Madonna wasn't so limiting: hers was simply Power.


**THE REVOLUTION
KEYBOARDIST
MATT FINK ON LIFE
WITH PRINCE...**


Accepting *Classic Pop*'s award for Best Artist Of The 80s on Prince's behalf, The Revolution keyboardist Matt Fink says: "This is an honour, thank you."

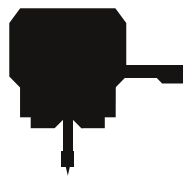
I never asked Prince what his achievements meant to him, but he had a special room at Paisley Park showing all his awards – I'm sure he was very proud of them."

Matt says Prince saw Madonna, Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen, Larry Graham and Stevie Wonder as his peers. "Prince's creativity and work ethic was unparalleled," adds Matt. "The musicians Prince surrounded himself with also influenced him and brought ideas that he utilised so well."

Asked what he first thinks of if anyone says "The Eighties", Matt laughs: "All the big hairstyles – many of those were influenced by Prince And The Revolution, too!" It's Prince's humour that Matt misses most, explaining: "We used to joke around quite a bit, and Prince always brought funny moments to those times."

Prince's death means The Revolution's shows now will always be poignant, and Matt adds: "We'll always miss Prince, he will never be replaced. The grief will never leave, so we still talk to Prince before shows in the dressing room, knowing he's there in spirit. It brings some comfort to the group."

● The Revolution play *Shepherd's Bush Empire* on 13-14 February.



CLASSIC

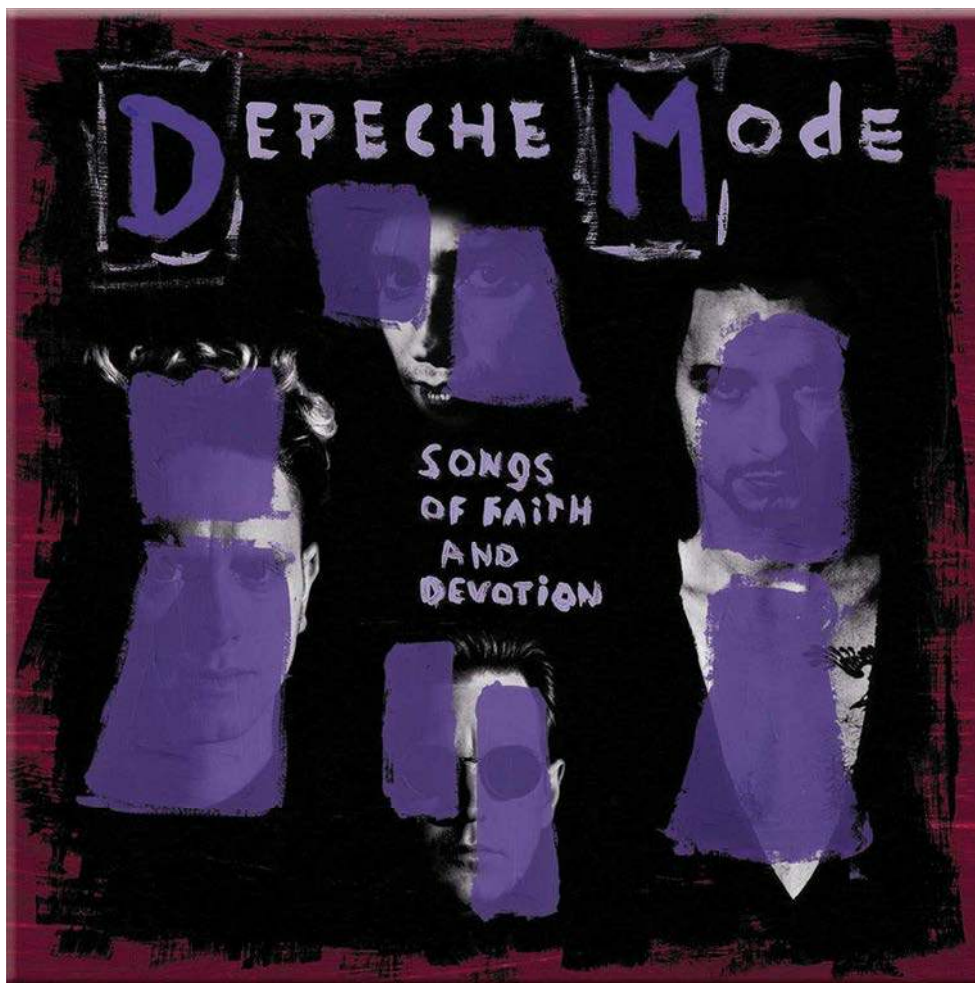
ALBUM

SONGS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION

DEPECHE MODE

FOLLOWING UP THE ENORMOUS SUCCESS OF VIOLATOR ALMOST BROKE DEPECHE MODE. BUT DESPITE DAVE GAHAN'S HEROIN ADDICTION AND INTER-BAND FIGHTING, WITH SONGS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION THEY EVENTUALLY CREATED A DARK MASTERPIECE.

RIK FLYNN



// struggled and struggled and struggled with it... it was like pulling teeth."

So said producer Flood of the arduous sessions that eventually churned out *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*, Depeche Mode's eighth studio album. While most groups have their off days, this particular venture was clearly a trial of biblical proportions – and one that would see tempers fray, time wasted and one core member up sticks for good.

At the close of the World Violation Tour in support of their last album, *Violator*, Depeche Mode were a band at the height of their powers. A triumphant cavalcade of 11 articulated lorries and 100 stage crew had helped them reach the ears of well over a million fans in various stadiums around the globe. The album won triple platinum status and cemented the group as major-league stars. Understandably, the four human beings at the centre of the maelstrom had been run ragged by the whole affair.

Almost two years later, when Martin Gore, Dave Gahan, Alan Wilder and Andy Fletcher reconvened in a London bar shortly before they were due to kick-start the whole process all over again, circumstances had changed considerably. For one, they faced a wall of intimidating proportions with the need to follow up – or even equal – the success of *Violator*. Not only had the musical climate shifted considerably with the scuzz guitars of grunge cranked up in their absence but, far more importantly, here stood four altered souls who'd barely crossed paths since emerging from the tour bus.

Frontman Dave Gahan, in particular, was unrecognisable: super-skinny, goatee-bearded with hair down to his shoulders, heavily tattooed and recast as the ready-made rock god. Having split from his wife, he'd relocated to LA and immersed himself in everything La La Land had to offer.

"*Violator* was huge around the world and I should have been on top of the world," he

explained to *Melody Maker*. "I had everything I could possibly want, but I was really lost. I didn't even feel like I knew myself anymore. And I felt like shit, 'cause I constantly cheated on my wife, and went back home and lied. My soul needed cleansing." He'd started a new relationship with the band's American PR Teresa Conroy, who brought with her a hip new cast of intimates that included the likes of art-rockers Jane's Addiction. From his mansion in the Hollywood Hills, and with his newly-acquired Harley-Davidson propped up outside, Gahan cooked up an entirely new vision for the band. Not only that, but with idle hands came a drug habit that quickly got out of hand. "I'd changed," he admitted, "but I didn't really understand it until I came face to face with Al and Mart and Fletch. The looks on their faces battered me."

For Flood, Alan was 'the craftsman', Martin, 'the ideas man', and Dave, 'the attitude'. In the midst of the whirlwind, Gahan had taken his role to the extreme. "I consciously thought, there's no fucking rock stars out there any more," he told *NME*. "No-one was willing to go the whole way to do this. So I created a monster... and I dragged my body through the mud to show that I could do it." While hidden from sight at first, Gahan's heroin habit would



Depeche Mode, 1993. Within two years, Alan Wilder (second left) would be gone

© Anton Corbijn

THE PLAYERS



MARTIN GORE

As well as penning the lion's share of the band's songs from across their career – including all the tracks on *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* – Gore occasionally takes the lead vocal. He won an Ivor Novello for his songwriting in 1999. Gore also has two solo albums of his own: *Counterfeit* and *MG*.



DAVE GAHAN

While Martin Gore is Depeche Mode's chief tunesmith, frontman Gahan has songwriting credits on the *Playing The Angel*, *Sounds Of The Universe*, *Delta Machine* and *Spirit* albums. To date, he has released two solo albums himself – *Paper Monsters* and *Hourglass* – and has also collaborated on two long-players with Soulsavers.



ANDY FLETCHER

While the only member of the band yet to receive a songwriting credit, keyboardist 'Fletch' takes care of the business side of the band's affairs and often appears as their spokesman. Fletcher also runs his own occasional indie label, Toast Hawaii, and is a DJ.



ALAN WILDER

A regular fixture in the co-producer's chair for Depeche Mode and a pivotal part of the production for *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*, Wilder has also produced Nitzer Ebb and Curve. Since leaving Depeche Mode, he has focused on his own Recoil project.



FLOOD

Multi-talented producer Mark 'Flood' Ellis (so named because of his propensity to make tea in the studio), has worked with artists including U2, New Order, Nine Inch Nails, Gary Numan and Erasure amongst many others. He worked with Depeche Mode on *Violator*, struggled through *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*, and mixed *Delta Machine*.

THE SONGS

1 I FEEL YOU

A clear statement of intent, first single and album opener *I Feel You* initiated a new chapter for the band. From the ear-piercing synth that introduces the whole shebang to the grinding, ever-present blues-rock riff around which the track circles, this exhibited the new performance-weighted manifesto. Alan Wilder's live drums were sampled, channelled through synthesizers and finally aligned into sequenced loops to exhilarating effect. "The main reason for the choice was that the track had attitude and was radically different to what we had done before," stated Alan Wilder. "We hoped it would surprise people and make them curious about the rest of the album." And so it did. The song reached No.8 in the UK and was the group's highest-charting single worldwide. It's clear the Depeche Mode of old had left the room.

2 WALKING IN MY SHOES

With human frailty and judgement as its principal themes, this brooding second single is widely considered one of Martin Gore's finest creations. "It was constructed using an unusual method for us, i.e. jamming together," explained Wilder. "Martin played the guitar, I played bass and we ran a rhythm machine – this was just to get the basic feel for the track – and after much trial and error, the chorus bassline and guitar pattern fell into place." Flood and Wilder then constructed the main riff, before adding loops, string arrangements and various studio trickery. The single made No. 14 in the UK.

3 CONDEMNATION

A sermon of bitter acceptance preached over a solemn gospel march, *Condemnation* embodies the shadowy appeal of the album as a whole. Both Martin Gore – in terms of his mastery of songwriting – and Dave Gahan – in terms of delivering an utterly compelling vocal – are at their absolute pinnacle. *Condemnation* takes on a hymnal quality thanks to its super-slow tempo and an ever-present chain-gang hum, both of which add to its unique processional quality. "The idea of that track was to enhance the gospel feel that the song originally

had without going into pastiche, and to try to create the effect of it being played in a room, in a space," said Wilder to *Keyboard Magazine*. They achieved the effect by recording each band member separately, but in the same space, with organ, drums, clapping and percussion.

4 MERCY IN YOU

One more in the name of salvation, *Mercy In You* is a classic mix of the dark and light shades from the Depeche palette. Martin Gore's slurred slide guitar line interrupted by Wilder's clanking "rap-like drum loop", the ethereal soft synths that momentarily reframe the lyrics and Dave Gahan's pleading cry, mesh to form a vast, many-splendoured production. It also indulged Wilder's penchant for backwards sounds, with a reversed piano. "Having taken psychedelic drugs in my youth, it reminds me of listening to music in that state of mind; everything sounds backwards," he told *Keyboard* in 1993. "So when I hear something backwards, it takes me off into a sort of trippy mood."

5 JUDAS

Plenty going on here, from the reverse reverb-caked uilleann pipes that introduce the song to the lyrical themes of atonement and sacrifice, this time beautifully delivered by Martin Gore. The band attempted several different versions, from a reggae-esque take to a blues-country version. The closing crowd vocals were created thanks to a cast of tape ops, secretaries and kitchen staff from the studio. Their combined voices were multitracked to create an ensemble of over 90 voices and the makeshift studio choir was then processed to sound as if recorded in a church. Choir or no choir, the fighting continued and Flood remembered the track for all the wrong reasons. "Judas was the last track we mixed and I can always remember – it was like the last day of mixing the whole album – and Alan and Martin are sitting on the couch arguing about it."

6 IN YOUR ROOM

One of Alan Wilder's all-time favourite Depeche Mode tracks, *In Your Room* was the fourth and final single to be extracted from the album. While the song took several attempts stylistically in the studio, the end product remains one of the band's greatest

moments. Dave Gahan's deep baritone works its magic atop a cyclical, chiming electric guitar before yet more doom-laden loops come crashing in to remind us that this is *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* we're listening to. A variphone synth riff brings the track home with exquisite perfection. Nirvana producer Butch Vig's reworked *Zephyr Mix* was released as a single and it reached No.8 in the UK charts.

7 GET RIGHT WITH ME

Resplendent with distorted vinyl scratching, pounding loop and resonant guitars, this is one of the more uplifting tracks on the album. On this, the shortest song, Gahan is joined in his message of unification by a trio of gospel singers – Basil Meade, Hildia Campbell and Samantha Smith – and collectively they carry us up into a pleasingly jubilant climax.

8 RUSH

An ever-present arpeggiated synth loop that winds in on itself, a protagonist haunted by guilt and lies, drug references and the occasional intense, unearthly sample meant many an album critic clocked the Nine Inch Nails motifs when describing the noisy, propellant nature of *Rush* – and we'd agree; Flood had, after all, worked with Trent Reznor on *Pretty Hate Machine* a few years prior.

9 ONE CARESS

Unlike the laborious nature of many of the tracks on *SOFAD*, the only ballad in the set was the second-fastest recording of any Depeche track, ever. During the final sessions in London's Olympic Studios, Martin Gore took on lead vocal duties, delivering his quivering tenor live atop a sweeping 28-piece string section arranged by Wil Malone. Malone was chosen thanks to his sublime work on Massive Attack's *Unfinished Sympathy*, a favourite of both Wilder and Gore. "That was maybe 10 minutes of studio work in a whole year," remembered Gahan, "but it was a very special moment." The track was released as a US-promo single.

10 HIGHER LOVE

Described humorously by Fletcher as "our Tears For Fears moment", and one of the most synth-happy tracks on the album, *Higher Love* closed out the LP immersed in an epic euphoria. Commencing with the band's familiar deep,

soft synths, and with a sequenced Moog bassline that steadied the ship, this curtain call is further augmented by ambrosial floating samples – a requisite haunting vocal that mirrors the distorted harpsichord/piano line brings it all together, as Gahan is "Heaven-bound on the wings of love..."



Dave Gahan in full-on
rock god mode on stage
in the Netherlands,
June 1993



© Rob Verhast/Rediffusion

"We wanted to try to change as many things about our approach to making music as we possibly could, mainly to keep ourselves interested in what we're doing and to challenge ourselves"

ALAN WILDER

plague the recording of *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*.

In stark contrast, Martin had moved to the leafy peripheries of Hertfordshire and had a daughter, Wilder had settled in the Sussex countryside and was busy experimenting with his side-project Recoil and – equally un-rock'n'roll – Andy Fletcher had opened a restaurant in St. John's Wood. It was soon clear to the others that Dave was hellbent on deserting the synth-heavy sound that had defined the band. "I went back with this attitude that we've got to make a rock record," he remembered. "I was all gung-ho... and the rest of the guys were not part of my plan." Nonetheless, both Gore and Wilder at least had reinvention in mind. "We wanted to try to change as many things about our approach to making music as we possibly could," Wilder explained to *Keyboard* magazine, "mainly to keep ourselves interested in what we're doing and to challenge ourselves."

When Gore's initial demos reached the rest of the band in early 1992, the bluesy

motif of *I Feel You*, the dark ruminations of *Walking In My Shoes* and gospel centrepiece *Condemnation* immediately connected with Gahan.

"The lyrics were completely appropriate to the way I was feeling," he explained. "It was almost like Mart was writing the stuff for me."

Songs Of Faith And Devotion was a tale of three cities. First Madrid, then Hamburg and finally, after a 10-month slog, the album was wrapped in London. *Music For The Masses* had been recorded in Paris and *Violator* was split between Milan and northern Denmark – this time it would begin in Spain. When a suitable studio proved hard to find, Flood floated the idea to improvise. Having recently completed U2's *The Joshua Tree* in a residential house converted into a studio, he figured a similar set-up would be equally revitalising for Depeche Mode.

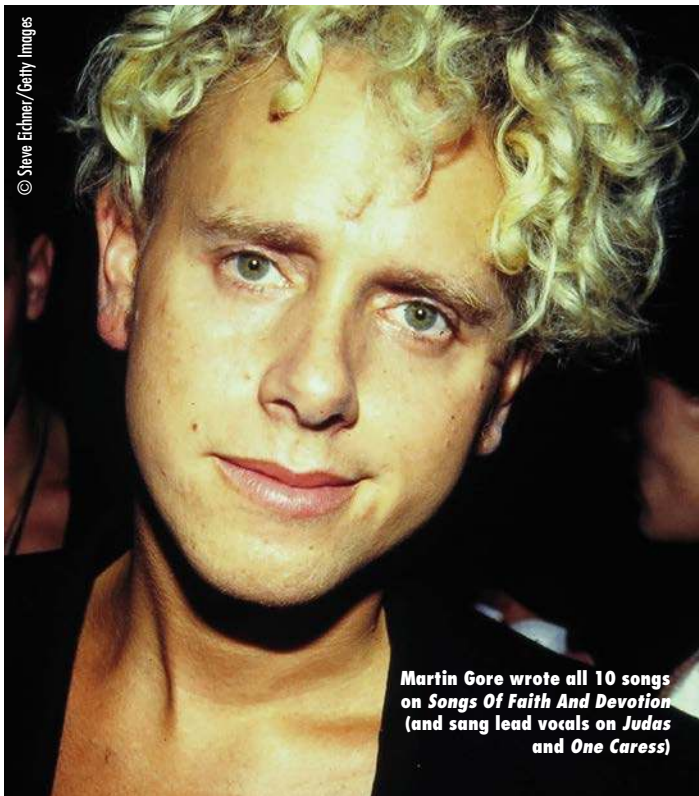
The ideal spot was located in a gated community in the upmarket, diplomatic quarter of Madrid. "We were going to live together, record together... it was going to be wonderful," Wilder would later summarise. "Well it didn't really work out that way." The following weeks would be one of the most toxic periods in the band's history.

Violator 2.0 was never on the cards. This time a "looser, less programmed" feel was the ethos, with the dynamics of human performance to the fore. But with little or no pre-production, the reality hit hard. "When we go in and play together, we end up sounding like a pub rock band," concluded Wilder. "We're not capable of going into a room, playing together, and coming up with a magical piece of music. We have to apply all that technology to make it sound more spontaneous and human." Nonetheless they persevered, and standout track *Walking In My Shoes* was

borne of one of those laborious Madrid jam sessions: Gore on guitar and Wilder on bass, playing along to a looped rhythm track. Flood and Wilder then constructed further drum loops and string arrangements, as well as the central riff, a combination of piano and harpsichord through a distorted guitar amp. The villa's basement – with its garish salmon and black marble decor – became the drum room.

One of the first songs started in Madrid evolved into one of the finest, and for once Gahan was coaxed out of his stupor. "The only thing that I felt I really did on that record was do what I considered was probably my all-time greatest vocal on *Condemnation*," he said. "Most of the rest of the time I would sporadically come in and out of the studio and blurt out some ideas and then go back and lock myself in my room. It was probably really hard for the rest of the guys." Despite his condition, he pushed himself, singing in higher keys. "I worked personally with Dave for many years to get the optimum performance out of him and I actually believe that some of his best vocals are on the *SOFAD* album," Wilder explained to Recoil's website. "Dave's voice on tracks such as *In Your Room*, *Condemnation*, *I Feel You* and *Walking In My Shoes* absolutely mirrors the intensity of the music."

Still, with barely anything in the can, the session had been a disaster. The claustrophobia of living in each other's pockets, endless tinkering with no success, unspoken tensions, and a singer who was – unbeknownst to the others – doing heroin in-between takes, meant things moved at a glacial pace. "I remember being in there with Flood and I swear he was in tears because he was at such a loss at what to do to pull this thing together," remembered Gahan.



© Steve Edner/Getty Images

Martin Gore wrote all 10 songs
on *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*
(and sang lead vocals on *Judas*
and *One Caress*)

THE BIG PICTURE THE VIDEOS

I FEEL YOU

Directed by Anton Corbijn, the man behind the concepts for both the World Violation and Devotional world tours, this simplistic black and white video cemented the band's new image. Shots of the members cloaked in blackness are interrupted when Dave Gahan's outstretched arms introduce the curtain-drop into each new landscape: Martin Gore stomps around some mountainous expanse, the two perform in front of an abandoned church and actress Lysette Anthony coquettishly eyes up the camera, playing the part of the enigmatic lover.

youtu.be/iTKJ_itifQg



WALKING IN MY SHOES

For the record's second satellite, Corbijn chose to lean heavily on the religious imagery of the album. With a palette of black and white, purple, red, emerald green and flaming orange, there's starkly lit shots of band members cowering in a shadowy corner, interspersed with various ambiguous characters, from shamanic bird-headed men and medieval serfs to a priest-like figure and a nun. A mountain backdrop is revealed, its winding path suggesting an uphill route to salvation. The video was censored for US MTV, although the uncut version is available on several DVDs.

youtu.be/GrC_yuzO-Ss



CONDEMNATION

Yet more dubious theological symbolism was adopted for the album's processional third single. A maiden in a virginal white gown stares down the lens, before Dave Gahan – in a bright brilliant white vest – mouths the lyrics from amidst a solemn marching group of hooded figures, seemingly leading him to some kind of willing surrender. Various laughing, flirting and kissing couples stare on as this funereal cortege passes by, eventually guiding their passenger to the white-gowned girl, before the two are chained together in a lustful embrace.

youtu.be/r9zdS6Dn4-A



IN YOUR ROOM

For the album's final single, and unsure if this would be his last with the group, Anton Corbijn chose to survey his own portfolio with the band over the years, via references to imagery from *Strangelove*, *I Feel You*, *Walking In My Shoes*, *Halo*, *Enjoy The Silence*, *Personal Jesus*, *Condemnation* and *Never Let Me Down Again*. Scenes of partial nudity and bondage meant the video appeared after hours on US MTV, which led to a lack of sales in America. It is also the last video to feature Alan Wilder, who left the group soon after.

youtu.be/cGvZyrhObrg



"It was like we'd had a run of great luck and then on *Songs*... all of the luck had evaporated," added Flood. "Everyone had camped into their little area and they were sticking to their guns."

With progress at an all-time low, Mute boss Daniel Miller discovered a studio almost completely devoid of activity. "I turned up after a couple of weeks, but the vibe was terrible," Miller conveyed to *Electronic Beats*. "You had Martin and Fletch taking up their normal pose on the sofa reading the tabloids; Alan was in another room practising drums; one of the engineers had his feet up on the desk asleep; Dave was up in his room, all the curtains drawn, painting. Flood was trying to get some kind of sound. It was a horrible, poisonous atmosphere."

When the band relocated to Hamburg's Chateau Du Pape studios, a more familiar working environment meant the success rate immediately increased: eight tracks were completed in six weeks, compared to the slim pickings



The album's four singles – *I Feel You*, *Condemnation*, *Walking In My Shoes* and *In Your Room*

outlined Wilder. Another new tack was the inclusion of outsiders for the first time. Irish multi-instrumentalist Steafan Hannigan's uilleann pipes transformed the intro to *Judas*, and gospel singers augmented the jubilant *Get Right With Me*. Gore sang live with a 28-piece string section on *One Caress* – recorded in less than an hour. For Gahan, *Songs*... would be "the opposite to what anyone was expecting from Depeche Mode."

Against all odds, the album was finally released at the end of March 1993. It had cost a small fortune, but out of the mire came a work of towering strength that would endow the

"In the face of adversity you often produce your best work. In a way, it's an exact tribute to the emotions of the time and the chemistry between the people."

ALAN WILDER

mined from Madrid. Hamburg was also the place in which the band finally discovered Gahan's various drug paraphernalia, but that was a battle for another time. "Even though he was on heroin and wasn't here most of the time," remembered Gore, "whenever he went into the studio and did a vocal, it was amazing."

As the album finally came together in London, Flood and Wilder adopted sequencers to restructure the live takes, while Gore's guitars remained a vital focus. "We're applying the technology to a performance to make sure that you get all the dynamics of a human performance, all those slight timing changes that make something feel human,"

band with a powerful new aura and trump its predecessor to score the cherished No.1 spot in both the UK and America. "In the face of adversity you often produce your best work," surmised Wilder. "In a way, it's an exact tribute to the emotions of the time and the chemistry between the people," added Flood. For Gahan they'd "finally managed to marry the electronics and Depeche Mode qualities that have always been there with performance and musicianship." But "something broke" in Wilder during the making of *SOFA*, and the ensuing 180-date Devotional tour – cited as the most debauched tour in history – would prove the last straw, but that's one for another day... ■

POPARAZZI

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BILLY IDOL AND STEVE STEVENS WITH LESLEY BOWEN

"This pic came from a VIP meet-and-greet at the London Eventim Apollo in London on 9 November 2014. We all got in to meet Billy and Steve before the show and have a quick chat and photo. I've been a big fan since the Generation X days and the gig just proved that Billy still had it!"



MARILYN WITH DAVID LINDSAY

"My picture with Marilyn was taken at the backstage door of the Celebrity Theatre in Phoenix, Arizona, following a Culture Club concert on 23 August 2016. I've been a Marilyn fan since way back in the day – I bought his first (and only) album new off the racks in 1985. Maz had posted on Facebook that he was coming to Phoenix to see Gina (Boy George) in concert. Waiting by the stage door following the show, I saw him leave and called after him. I think he was pleased to be recognised and was very happy to stop and chat. I didn't bring anything for him to sign, but I had grabbed a setlist off the stage and asked him to sign that. He said, 'I'm happy to, just don't let Gina see it!'"



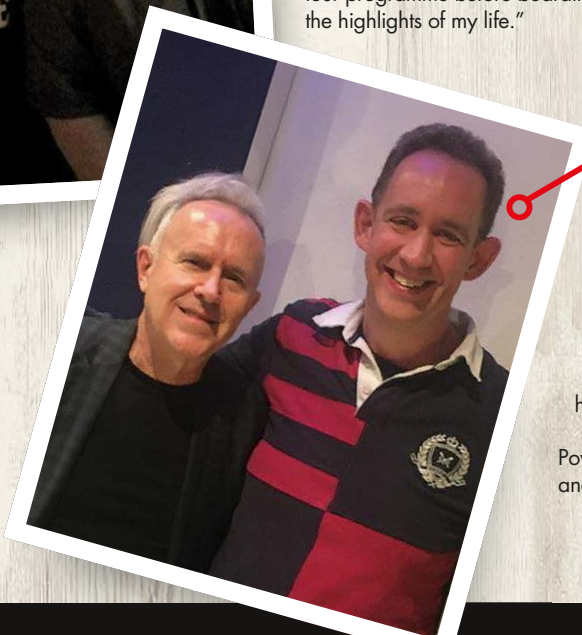
GEORGE MICHAEL WITH GREG McDONALD

"This is a photo of me and George Michael taken at Perth Airport in Australia on 10 March 1988. I'd seen him the night before on his Faith tour. I knew his flight schedule (a friend had told me about it) and waited patiently at the airport for him to arrive. He arrived with Kathy Jeung and stopped to chat to a few of us fans. He signed my tour programme before boarding the flight. It still ranks as one of the highlights of my life."



HOWARD JONES WITH ANDY GREEN

"My photo with Howard Jones was taken during a fan event organised by Cherry Red Records on 17 November 2018. Numbers were limited to 40 people and following a Q&A and 45-minute performance there was a signing and photo session at the end of the evening – I brought along a photo of myself with Howard that we had taken at his indigo at The O2 gig nine years previously. The event included a tour of Studio C at the Power House and a chance to meet the engineer and producer who worked on Howard's first two albums, *Human's Lib* and *Dream Into Action*."





PADDY McALOON

Every little bit HERTZ

WITH HIS ONLY SOLO ALBUM I TRAWL THE MEGAHERTZ NOW REBRANDED AS A PREFAB SPROUT RECORD, PADDY McALOON IS READY FOR A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS HIS COLLECTIVE'S WONDROUS LEGACY. THERE MAY BE LESS PREFAB SPROUT MUSIC THAN ANYONE – INCLUDING PADDY – WOULD LIKE, BUT NO-ONE CAN ARGUE WITH THE QUALITY OF WHAT'S THERE. PADDY TELLS CLASSIC POP ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES OF HIS OBSESSIVE WRITING AND HOW HEARING PROBLEMS MAKE HIM CHERISH HIS SINGING MORE THAN EVER.

JOHN EARLS

Nobody comes closer than Paddy McAloon to being a pop wizard. It's not just his softly magical albums like *Steve McQueen*, *From Langley Park To Memphis* and *Crimson/Red*. He even looks like a picture-book wizard, too: horn-rimmed round-lensed glasses, flowing silver hair, and a matching beard he sometimes strokes when pondering the reasons why Prefab Sprout rarely toured or how he's ended up writing a musical with Spike Lee.

If Paddy resembles Dumbledore, down to the mischief in his eyes as he resolutely refuses to take his status too seriously, then he greets *Classic Pop* in classical surroundings to match – a book-lined, spacious suite at the five-star Gore Hotel near South Kensington station in West London. Its opulence baffles Paddy, who admits: "My wife says it doesn't matter where I am because I live in my head, and she's right. This hotel is nice, but it could just as easily be a Premier Inn."

A Premier Inn just wouldn't be right for someone so respected. Paddy rarely gives interviews, so why not celebrate when he does? One of the melancholic tasks for any true Prefab Sprout fan is keeping track of the dozens of albums Paddy McAloon has written,

but hasn't finished. Having to explain his music to the media is one reason there isn't more Prefab Sprout music. "If I make something, it kills it stone dead if I spend too long talking about it," Paddy says.

"So I end up skipping the stage where I actually make the record. I write it and move on – which I know is absolutely mad, because I'm not making a living when I'm doing that." This is heartbreaking, not just because the world could always do with hearing more of Paddy McAloon's music, but also Paddy McAloon is a dream interviewee, both an absolute gentleman and a wise philosopher about music.

UNFINISHED SYMPHONIES

Unfinished Prefab Sprout albums include *Earth: The Story So Far* and a concept album about Michael Jackson. Paddy writes three LPs a year, but doesn't play them to anyone. He admits it's "an obsessional habit", saying: "I should have made more records and written fewer. I shouldn't keep so many hidden away in boxes. I'm not lazy, but it's difficult for the songs I write to satisfy me in the ways they used to. You only have so many moves as a writer, no matter how good you are. The thrill is when I surprise myself and think, 'That's pretty good, how did I do that?' You lose that ability as you get older."

Even the great successes in Prefab Sprout's canon like *Steve McQueen* remain something of a mystery to their creator. Their 1985 opus was the subject of a recent *Classic Album* feature in these pages, but Paddy insists: "You can go to bed thinking you're quite some guy, because you've written all these songs people like. But if you talk about them, you start reverse-engineering how those songs were created: you talk about them as if everything was pre-ordained. The truth is, you came up with a few good songs and you were lucky."

TOM THANKS

Paddy has long credited Prefab Sprout producer Thomas Dolby as playing a large part in *Steve McQueen*'s success, confirming now: "I have to give Tom the credit, because he chose the songs we should record. There were only 15 or 16

I played to him, not a huge amount. But in picking the ones he did, he helped shape the album. I wrote the songs, so it can look as if I always have the shape of an album in my head. And that's not quite true."

In fact, Paddy was never happier than before Prefab Sprout were even signed. They began with Paddy, his younger brother Martin, and Martin's drummer friend Mick Salmon in their native County Durham in 1975, seven years before debut single *Lions In My Own Garden* (*Exit Someone*) was released. "The romance all bands have when they can afford their first amp – *that's* what it's all about," sighs Paddy happily. "That's when you have the endless possibilities of the world. You make a lot of racket, rehearse endlessly and you're not so super-tight that anyone else would be impressed, but you've got something, and it's your own something."

For Paddy, that romance had disappeared once revered debut album *Swoon* was released

in 1984. "Once you make a living from music, the atmosphere shifts. People around us said after *Swoon*: 'That did OK for a record that didn't cost much. Where's your next one?' And suddenly, you're not bashing out songs in a rehearsal room, it's me in a room trying to ensure the band's got a good supply of material. It's a strange lifestyle, where you're almost totally dependent on what you

create, but musically it's not actually as intense as when you were amateurs, bashing away every night."

It was that pressure that meant Prefab Sprout rarely toured. They recorded the albums *From Langley Park To Memphis* and *Jordan: The Comeback* in the US, as Thomas Dolby was based there, but the band never actually toured the States.

"I didn't enjoy being in a band," summarises Paddy, his Geordie

speaking voice as soft and mellifluous as you'd hope from his music. "As a teenager, pop music answers some fantasy part of your mind. And the reality of it – being in the back of a van going to venues – was so far away from the fantasy that I just rejected it. I retreated to my bedroom mentality, recreating the conditions I had when I was 15, when I could just write and write instead." He tried telling bosses at CBS Records that he didn't want to do promo for Prefab Sprout albums, pointing out that Robert De Niro didn't do interviews, so why should he? "The reply came back, 'You're not Robert De Niro, you're some scratchy little group from Newcastle.'"

Paddy talks fondly of the artists he saw as his peers – Aztec Camera, The Waterboys, Scritti Politti – but smiles: "I was too shy to talk to people. Everyone would stay at the Columbia Hotel, and my brother Marty could talk to anyone. But when I saw Noddy Holder at the bar, I just thought, 'That's

"I DIDN'T ENJOY BEING IN A BAND, REALLY. AS A TEENAGER, POP MUSIC ANSWERS SOME FANTASY PART OF YOUR MIND. AND THE REALITY OF IT – BEING IN THE BACK OF A VAN GOING TO VENUES – WAS SO FAR AWAY FROM THE FANTASY THAT I JUST REJECTED IT."

Paddy McAloon

Paddy McAloon actually trained as a Catholic priest before becoming a musician

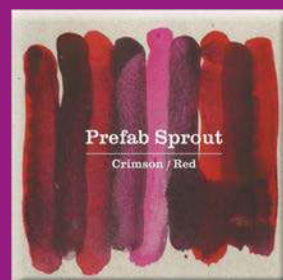
© Tom Sheehan



Prefab Sprout have released 10 studio LPs, from 1984's *Swoon*, through to 2013's *Crimson/Red*, and nearly 30 singles, beginning with 1982's non-album *Lions In My Own Garden* (*Exit Someone*)



Do The Sprout Thing



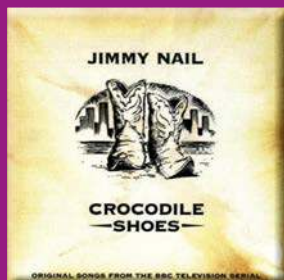
Immediately after Prefab Sprout's last album *Crimson/Red* in 2013, Paddy McAloon began working on a new LP. "The songs are catchy," he considers. "That's a bland word, but they're tuneful and brief."

However, work was interrupted in 2015 when Spike Lee got in touch, wanting to use Prefab Sprout's songs as the basis for a movie musical. Lee's brother Cinqué is a Sprout fan, and has been writing the script. Paddy met with the *Do The Right Thing* and *BlackKkKlansman* director, who admitted to the singer: "Full disclosure, I'd never heard of you before Cinqué played me your music."

Paddy is reluctant to reveal much about the story – "It's Spike's project, not mine" – but says: "It's a parable of a journey. Spike and Cinqué want to use an awful lot of my songs – there's one on every page. I wanted to give them new stuff as options for their storyline. My stance was, 'You can have my music, do what you want with it. But if you'd like a different option, like changing the gender of a song's narrator or pushing the lyrics more in your story's direction, I'll help.' I've given them an awful lot of options."

The musical hasn't been made yet, and Paddy explains: "Spike is one of those guys who always has a million plates spinning in the air, doing this and that. I don't know what will happen to it, because it's the film world. Who knows?" Meanwhile, two existing Prefab Sprout songs – *Mercy* and *Who Designed The Snowflake* – have been used in Lee's Netflix TV series adaptation of his film *She's Gotta Have It*.

Nailed On



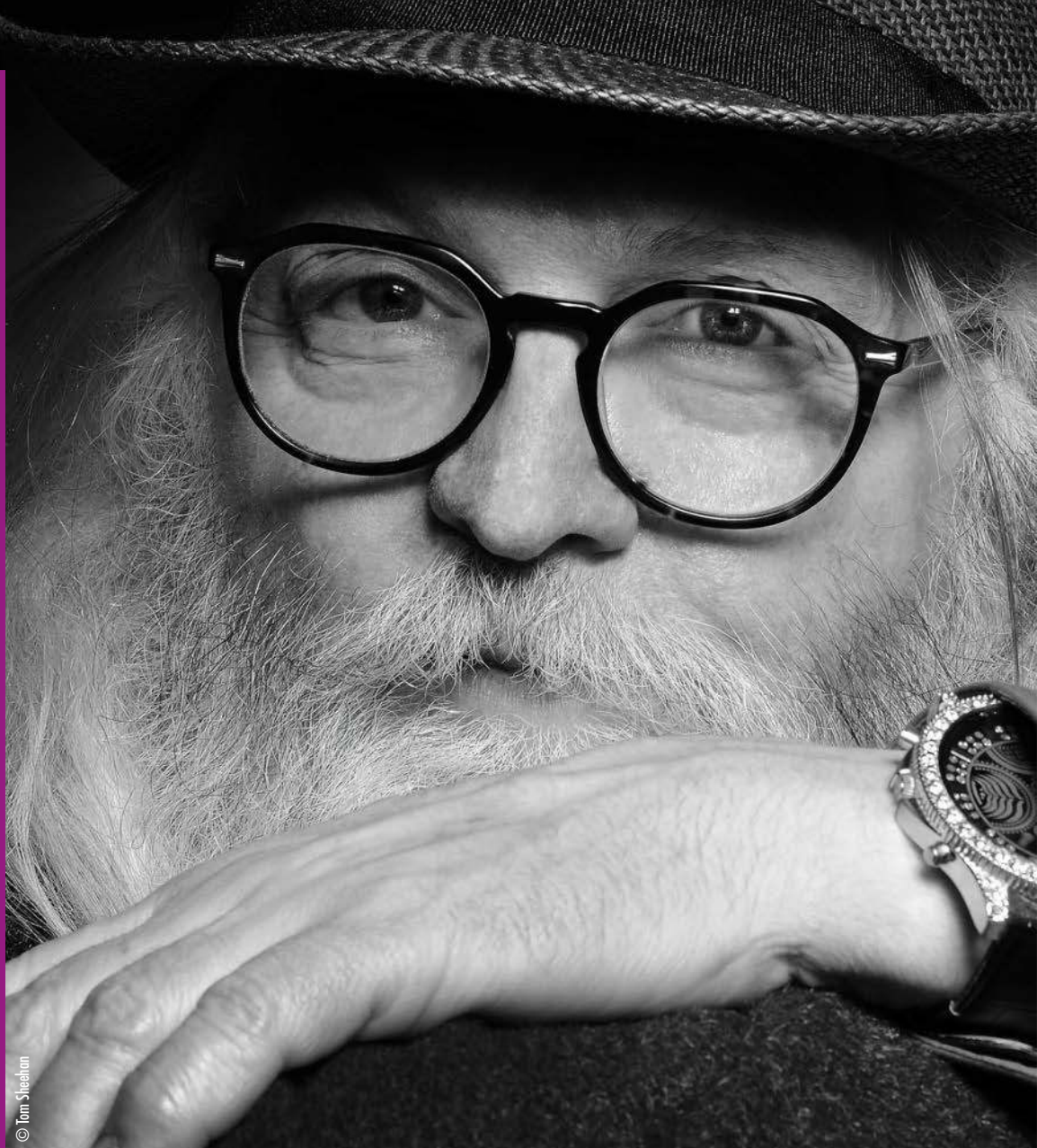
With so many unreleased Prefab Sprout songs in existence, it's surprising more singers haven't been offered the chance to use Paddy McAloon's music. Kylie, Rod Stewart and Cher have been afforded the luxury. "If you write for others, you have to give them a satisfactory demo," says Paddy. "And because I'm critical of my singing, I won't press the Record button for the demo."

Rod Stewart covered Sprout obscurity *Who Designed The Snowflake* on his recent album *Blood Red Roses*, leaving Paddy to consider: "Rod did a really nice job, and I realise I've probably been foolish in the past. I should have done this more often!"

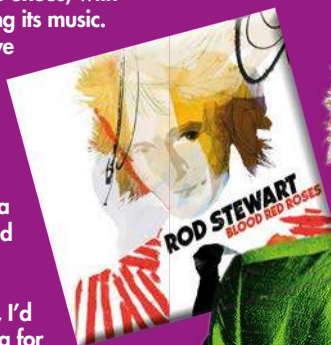
Paddy's biggest beneficiary is fellow Georgie Jimmy Nail. The *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* star played a pub singer trying to make it in Nashville in 1994 BBC1 drama *Crocodile Shoes*, with Paddy composing its music.

"I was very naïve in a way," laughs Paddy. "I gave Jimmy way more songs than he needed. Even if a scene just needed a song playing on a jukebox in the background, I'd write a new song for that. I gave it my all, and it worked for Jimmy. I speak to him occasionally, he's a very funny guy."

Cher, meanwhile, covered the title track of Prefab Sprout's 2001 album *The Gunman And Other Stories*. "I'd heard Cher was doing a record and I thought *The Gunman* might work for her," Paddy recalls. "That was crazy – the song is nine minutes long! But it still happened, and Trevor Horn is a big fan of *The Gunman*."



© Tom Sheehan



© Rankin

Rod Stewart – an unlikely Sprout fan

Noddy Holder!' like any fan would and go shy. I did meet David Bowie, though, in 2000. I said to him, 'You really used to chop them out in the 80s', and even as I said it I thought, 'That's a very strange analogy to use to The Thin White Duke.' Bowie thankfully knew what I meant and said, 'Yeah, I did, I could do two of those albums a year. But nobody would want them now.'

EVERYBODY HERTZ

One of Paddy's albums that comes closest to the romantic spirit of Prefab Sprout's early days is *I Trawl The Megahertz*. Released in 2003, it was the only long-player out under Paddy's own name. But its reissue rebrands it as a Prefab Sprout release.

The original Sprout-free identity of *I Trawl The Megahertz* is because it's so musically different. Closer to Shostakovich than *When Loves Breaks Down* or *The King Of Rock 'N' Roll*, it has a beautiful, neo-classical tranquillity, with two spoken-word passages, based on calls to late-night talk radio phone-in shows which Paddy listened to while recovering from eye surgery for a detached retina. It opens with the evocative 22-minute title track. "If I released records quicker, my career would be easier able to

© Tom Sheehan



absorb sudden changes like *Megahertz*," admits the 61-year-old. "People would go, 'Oh, this one is different,' like Bowie doing *Aladdin Sane* or *Low*. But at the time, I went through an agony of thinking, 'The opening track is 22 minutes and the people who like *Cars And Girls* might well think, "What the hell is this all about?"' Over time, those differences in your output just evaporate."

Of the album's adventurousness evoking the days before being signed, Paddy muses: "We always had it in us to be a very different band. Me, Marty and Mick liked stuff that wasn't always song-based, as the 70s had a richness on offer on late-night Radio 1, where you'd hear Tangerine Dream and Captain Beefheart next to Roxy Music. If you're three people jamming in a room, there's a lot of improvisation and instrumentals. We had those other possibilities, which closed down once I started thinking of myself as a writer of melodies."

The spoken-word passages were recited by Yvonne Connors, a commodities broker introduced to Paddy via a friend of his wife Vicki. "My wife is in teaching, she has a proper job," he laughs. "But her friend Lucy Cuthbertson knew people in theatrical circles and Lucy said, 'I know someone.' As soon as I heard this voice on my answerphone I thought, 'There's something there.'"

BATTLING ON

I Trawl The Megahertz is effectively a soft-launch for a full Prefab Sprout reissue campaign, which Sony will begin later this year. Paddy talks excitedly of seeking out contemporary demos to accompany every album, despite *Steve McQueen* having been given an expanded reissue in 2007. "I've got the *Steve McQueen* demos that I played Tom Dolby on my guitar," he reveals. "He wrote the songs he wanted on the back of a cigarette packet. I've no idea what those demos are like, but if they're rubbish people can go, 'Thomas did a really good job there!' There's a song called *Snowy Rents A Dog* that I hope will finally make it onto an album. We submitted it for *Steve McQueen* but Thomas didn't pick it, so we submitted it for the next album and he still didn't pick it. It became a running joke between me and Marty – 'Do you think *Snowy* will finally

make it?' It's obvious Thomas didn't think it was very good."

Sadly, while Paddy still struggles with bad eyesight, he calls it "small beer" compared to the condition which has significantly damaged his ability to create music. Since 2006, Paddy has suffered from hearing disorder Meniere's Disease. He's had three major bouts, most recently in October 2017, which has left him with seemingly permanent tinnitus in his right ear. "Even as I'm talking to you, it's constant," he explains matter-of-factly.

Meniere's Disease means Paddy is unable to play music with other people, as it's too loud. Instead, he now composes songs on a tiny two-octave Yamaha keyboard, hitting boxes as noisily as his hearing can tolerate for percussion. "I can work in batches of an hour-and-a-half," says Paddy. "My bad ear dominates the good one, which means I can't judge pitch easily. I keep hoping it'll recede, but I'm just glad I'm no longer falling over and dizzy like when I had the last major bout. I cherish it now when I can sing. I didn't like my singing for such a long time. Maybe there'll come a time with Meniere's when I can't sing at all, and I'll think, 'You idiot, you should have sung every day.' For now, I'm happy in the corner of a room, singing into my cassette player." He adds that his most recent unfinished LP, *Jockey Of Discs*, is "The Prefab Sprout dance album."

Hearing problems, self-doubt, obsessive album delays – it may seem a worrying fate for Prefab Sprout's leader.

But there's a delight about Paddy, too, the air of someone who can't believe he got to live out his fantasies, no matter how frustrating some of them proved to be. He has three daughters, aged 15 to 20, and even they think he's cool. "They'll never say it, but I think my daughters think that in some strange way I'm hip," he laughs. "They'll intimate to me that people think I'm some sort of deal." Being the non-embarrassing dad? That's the perfect life for the King Of Rock 'N' Roll. Long may he reign. ■



"IF I RELEASED RECORDS QUICKER, MY CAREER WOULD BE EASIER ABLE TO ABSORB SUDDEN CHANGES LIKE MEGAHERTZ. PEOPLE WOULD GO, 'OH, THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT,' LIKE BOWIE DOING ALADDIN SANE OR LOW. BUT AT THE TIME, I WENT THROUGH AN AGONY OF THINKING, 'THE OPENING TRACK IS 22 MINUTES AND THE PEOPLE WHO LIKE CARS AND GIRLS MIGHT WELL THINK, "WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ALL ABOUT?"'"

Paddy McAloon

Paul McCartney told McAloon that *The King Of Rock 'N' Roll* was to his back catalogue what *My Ding-A-Ling* was to Chuck Berry's



● *I Trawl The Megahertz* by Prefab Sprout is released on 1 February and is reviewed on page 88

2019 The year ahead

GRAB YOUR FILOFAX AND SPIN THAT ROLODEX BECAUSE A PACKED 12 MONTHS OF FRESH POP IS COMING YOUR WAY. AS THE YEARS ROLL BY, A GROWING NUMBER OF MAJOR MUSICAL ANNIVERSARIES REAR THEIR NOSTALGIC HEAD. IN FACT, MANY CLASSIC POP FAVOURITES WILL CELEBRATE SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES THIS YEAR AND, DESPITE CONTINUING FALLS IN ALBUM SALES, A WHOLE BUNCH OF THEM ARE BUSY CRAFTING NEW MUSIC AND PLOTTING LIVE EVENTS. HERE'S A PEEK AT WHAT 2019 HAS IN STORE FOR OUR EARS.

RUDY BOLLY

1

THE SPECIALS

Encore, The Specials' first album of new material since Terry Hall rejoined in 2008, lands on 1 February, marking not just the band's 40 years in the business, but four decades of the legendary 2 Tone label (read our review on page 81). First single *Vote For Me*, produced by Hall, plus Lynval Golding and Horace Panter, alongside Danish musician/producer Nikolaj Torp Larsen, is out now for your listening pleasure. It's the first time the three founding members have recorded new music together since the band's 1981 No.1 single, *Ghost Town*, and they will make sure it gets a good airing on tour around the UK throughout April and May.





2

MADNESS

Speaking of anniversaries, Madness are also popping Champagne corks for their 40th birthday this year. Suggs told *Classic Pop*: "We are going to do a lot of special things [in 2019]. None of them are set in stone so I can't really talk about them, but we certainly hope to make a new record." Their paths may cross with old buddies The Specials, too, if the time is right. "I saw Terry Hall recently, and I see Jerry Dammers; it's not my place to say but Jerry and Terry aren't really getting on, so it's a bit of a shame." Madness recently revealed they have recorded music with grime star Skepta and there have been more 'painful' sessions in the studio. "We wrote four songs in a week and then on the Friday we had a big fight and everyone went their separate ways." Not much has changed after 40 years then!



3

BANANARAMA

The 'Nanas have been working on a new studio album for the best part of three years but they got side-tracked by their reunion with original member Siobhan Fahey. Now back to the core duo of Sara and Karen, the girls could preview material on their Australian tour in February. "We're hoping to get our album finished," revealed Keren recently. "We were part-way through recording when this whole [reunion] thing came up. We do have a nucleus of fans who have been very loyal to us and love getting new music – we haven't had any out for a bit."

4

THE FIZZ

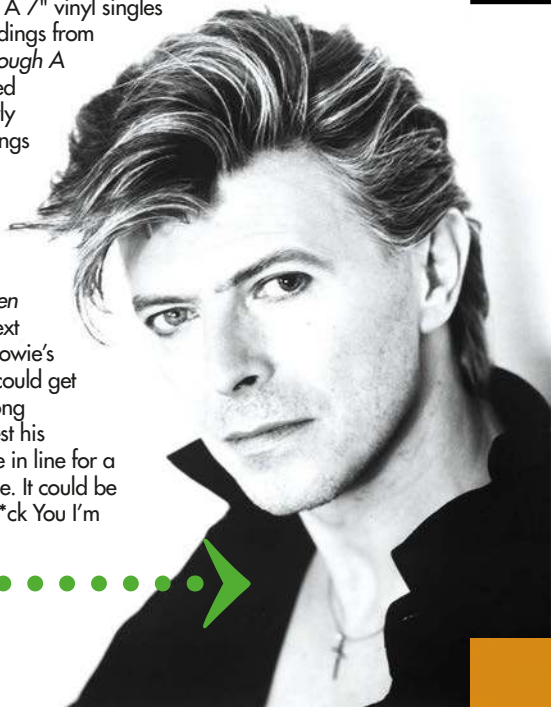
2017's rather fine *F-Z Of Pop* was so well received that The Fizz, now a trio again after the departure of Bobby McVay, are already working on a follow-up. "We started recording new material when the idea to do a Christmas album took over," Cheryl Baker told *Classic Pop*, referring to their recent *Christmas With The Fizz* LP. "So we have recorded a few songs already and we just need to finish it in the new year." Jay Aston's recovery from cancer means that delay may last a bit longer, but they've got producer Mike Stock back on board again. Cheryl added: "Mike's a genius; the way he arranges songs – he totally gets us." Expect plenty of summer shows, too.



5

DAVID BOWIE

David Bowie's untimely passing hasn't stopped him releasing records, far from it. If anything, more material has emerged from the Bowie estate since he passed away in 2016. Hot on the heels of an app which takes fans on a virtual tour of his *David Bowie Is* V&A exhibition, should come a major anniversary release. 2019 marks the 50th birthday of the *Space Oddity* album and there are whispers of a brand new remastered box set featuring rarities. A 7" vinyl singles boxset of nine rare recordings from that era titled *Spying Through A Keyhole* will also be issued including demos and early acoustic recordings of songs including *London Bye*, *Ta-Ta* and *Mother Grey*. So far there are no plans to release a follow-up to last year's *Loving The Alien* boxset focusing on the next significant five years of Bowie's career, but Tin Machine could get a mention. Rumours among Bowie aficionados suggest his much-maligned band are in line for a fresh celebratory package. It could be time to crack out those 'F*ck You I'm In Tin Machine'



6

HOWARD JONES

Howard has already given *Classic Pop* the lowdown regarding his new album in Issue 47.

Transform, out in May, is actually the next part of a quadrilogy which began with 2015's *Engage*. "Transform is like 'we need to reflect on ourselves, and if we want to change the world, we've got to change ourselves first,'" he says. Howard will be touring the UK in May celebrating the 35th anniversary of the *Human's Lib* album supported by old mates China Crisis, whom he supported back in the early days.



8

TEARS FOR FEARS

Delays to the duo's UK arena tour in 2018 "under doctor's orders"

gave Tears For Fears time to rethink their next studio album. Last year, they recorded a few more songs with producer Sacha Skarbek to add to that long-overdue LP, currently titled *The Tipping Point*. Curt Smith told *Classic Pop* at the time: "It's definitely more electronic and a little darker at times than the last record we did." A huge number of shows are planned for the summer suggesting the album should finally see the light of day, fingers crossed.

However, fans can take solace in at least one release – a special 30th anniversary edition of Tears For Fears' classic *The Seeds Of Love*, featuring a number of alternate versions of songs, rarities including the original version of Roland singing Oleta Adams' hit, *Rhythm Of Life*, amongst other gems.

7

PET SHOP BOYS

Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe hit Singapore in March for the final run of live dates on their Super tour. They then team up once again with producer Stuart Price to complete their 14th studio album, which we've been told to expect later this year. One of the 24 new tracks they've written is a little political and Tennant spilled: "We have written a track called *Give Stupidity A Chance*, which is a satire. It's close to a protest song, but it's also funny." Tennant also revealed the LP has "a major love song". Penguin will also reissue journalist Chris Heath's acclaimed two books about the duo, *Literally* and *Pet Shop*

Boys Vs America, which were published in the early 90s. As if that wasn't enough, Tennant hinted the pair were also working on "a dance/theatre thing".



GARY NUMAN

While we shouldn't expect brand new material, Numan is prepared to toast a big milestone in 2019, as it's the 40th anniversary of his *Replicas* and *The Pleasure Principle* LPs. "It's quite a big deal," he told *Classic Pop* recently, "so if I'm going to do any retrospective career thing, that's the best time to do it because there's a justification for it, a reason for doing it." A number of live events are being considered to mark the occasion but Numan isn't nostalgic enough to merely go through the motions. His recent orchestral shows may shine a light on how he intends to mark the occasion. "With my orchestral tour, I wanted it to be what I'm doing now. I wanted to orchestrate the Gary Numan of 2018, not the Gary Numan of the last 40 years."



10

THE CURE

Having toasted their 40th anniversary in 2018, Robert Smith seems intent on leaving no stone unturned in 2019. The band have been confirmed for a number of major festivals across Europe and are strongly rumoured to be headlining Glastonbury Festival. Bring a sleeping bag to any gig you witness, though, as Robert Smith is notoriously generous, and this year a brand new album will have to be crammed into the setlist, too. Smith said the new songs are turning out to be "slightly more cynical and slightly less optimistic. I was very optimistic when I was young, even though I wrote very dismal songs, but now I'm kind of the opposite."



11

DURAN DURAN

The band have entered the studio to start work on a follow-up to *Paper Gods*, and play the KAABOO Cayman festival in Grand Cayman on 16 February, followed by shows in New Orleans and Las Vegas. John Taylor revealed: "We've started work on new material, I can tell you this: I'm very excited about going back to this project. I think in March we will go back writing in the studio." Plus, the long-mooted musical by Nick Rhodes and John Taylor is getting closer with Nick updating: "John and I have finished the first draft and hope we will start to make some plans." He's also planning to release a book on art and another collection of his photography. As for new Duran material, it may not arrive until the end of 2019 with a view to big celebrations the following year. "I think we're looking toward 2020," John explained. "It's a big year for Duran Duran and there would be nothing better to celebrate that legacy than with an album of new music."

12

PRINCE

After many false dawns, the Prince estate is set to unleash its legendary vault in 2019. A number of releases are planned, so expect some of those never-before-heard tracks to finally see the light of day. Sony paid a small fortune for the rights to 35 catalogue Prince albums, starting with his post-1995 material, so prepare for some nice physical reissues, too. Also in the works is a new movie based on Prince songs. While the story won't actually feature the late legend himself, scriptwriters have teamed up with his estate to pen a new narrative using his best-loved lyrics. Let's hope it's more *Sign O' The Times* than *Jack U Off*.





13

MADONNA

The Queen of Pop broke fans' hearts when she announced a follow-up to *Rebel Heart* would be delayed until 2019. The Material Girl is enjoying her new life in Portugal, but she has been recording her music largely in the UK. Mirwais is one producer involved and this could well be the Madonna album where she ditches multiple collaborators and songwriters. She teased recently: "Remember when I made records with other artists from beginning to end and I was allowed to be a visionary and not to have to go to songwriting camps where no-one can sit still for more than 15 minutes...?"

15

MARK RONSON

Fresh from his Miley Cyrus collab, *Nothing Breaks*

Like A Heart, super-producer Ronson is preparing an entire album's worth of "sad bangers" for spring 2019. He told *Classic Pop*: "Obviously my albums are very reliant on collaborators and the people I work with. On this record I was going through some shit in my personal life and the separation [from my wife]." *CP* had an early peek and the end result is groovier than his *Uptown Special* record. With contributions from Lykke Li, Romy from The xx, Tame Impala's Kevin Parker and many more Ronson cohorts, expect another huge year for the hitmaker.



Just the ticket...

2019's diary is bursting with major live events, a bunch of them by acts missing key original members. It's nothing new in the rock world, Deep Purple made an entire career out of revolving frontmen, and even in pop the likes of Ultravox and INXS found success with different vocalists. However, the number of big name acts hiring fresh recruits is definitely on the rise. Spandau Ballet replaced Tony Hadley with Ross William Wild in 2018 and are plotting more shows once Gary Kemp completes touring with Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets. Then Wet Wet Wet head out on a major UK tour in the spring with new frontman Kevin Simm of Liberty X fame with new material to follow. Even major 90s pop acts Take That, Spice Girls, Westlife and Boyzone are all touring in 2019 and not one of them will feature the full original line-up for one reason or another. These aren't provincial gigs either, but huge arena and stadium tours. Perhaps buoyed by the ongoing success of the Freddie-less Queen who will tour the US next year with Adam Lambert once more, so too are The Revolution, The Cure, Bon Jovi, AC/DC and KISS, who all fall into the category of hotchpotch line-ups. Arguably the biggest of all these gigs is by Fleetwood Mac who play two nights at Wembley Stadium in the summer with Crowded House's Neil Finn on vocals (replacing the fired Lindsey Buckingham).

14

ABBA

The Super Swedes make their long-awaited comeback in 2019, in both

real and virtual forms. First off the bat will be two brand new ABBA songs recorded last year titled *I Still Have Faith In You* and *Don't Shut Me Down*. Benny Andersson, who had originally planned to release the songs in time for a Christmas documentary, said they had decided instead to release them in early 2019: "One is like a pop song from the 70s, the other one is kind of timeless." Bandmate Björn Ulvæus has hinted that a third song could follow, too. "If we do a third one, it won't be out until we go on the road." By road, he means the long-mooted ABBA hologram tour – or ABBA-tars as they have been christened. All four original members spent 2018 filming movements for special animated 3D projections that will turn back the clock and make them look like they did in 1979. "We thought we looked good that year," Ulvæus said. "You'll hear the voices of ABBA coming out of the mouths of the ABBA-tars. It'll be spooky, I assure you, but great fun and no-one has done it before." That tour will kick off in late 2019.



17

MICHAEL ROTHER

Neu! legend Michael Rother drops previously unreleased material in a new boxset titled *Solo* on 22 February. It culls music from his first four solo projects including *Flammende Herzen*. Among the new pieces is a track called *Groove 139* and the German said: "Groove 139 is a good example of why I enjoy playing live. In February 2018, we played at the Jazz Café in London and there was this buzz and anticipation in the air when we went onstage. The track reflects a mixture of premeditated material and improvised actions which I enjoy very much, these days."

16

THE THE

Buoyed by the success of his so-called *Comeback Special* gigs, Matt Johnson is keen to return to the studio. Following the final dates in Australia he said: "There's plenty to get my teeth into, political and personal. I've got a lot of strong songs that are half-written. But I need time, months of working hard every day. I need a long time to get deep into it. The plan was to get a great band and take advantage of that." Before *The The's* first non-soundtrack album in 19 years arrives, the band's performance at the Royal Albert Hall will be released as a film.



BEST OF THE REST

Expect new albums from... Morrissey, Ellie Goulding, Grimes, Beyoncé, Rihanna, Kanye West, Calvin Harris, Dua Lipa, Disclosure, Chemical Brothers, Stormzy, Bastille, Coldplay, Bruce Springsteen, Liam and Noel Gallagher (not together!), My Bloody Valentine, Lana Del Rey, Tame Impala, Backstreet Boys, Liam Payne, Niall Horan, Louis Tomlinson, Zayn Malik and Adele. ■



SQUEEZE

SOUTH LONDONERS SQUEEZE WERE CHART REGULARS FROM THE LATE 70s TO THE LATE 90s, WITH SONGWRITERS-IN-CHIEF CHRIS DIFFORD AND GLENN TILBROOK LABELLED "THE NEW LENNON AND MCCARTNEY". APPARENTLY, THEIR EX-KEYBOARDIST IS A FAMILIAR FACE ON THE SMALL SCREEN.

DAVID BURKE

They took their name from a Velvet Underground album title and boast a songwriting partnership that once elicited comparisons with Lennon and McCartney. And 45 years after forming in South London, Squeeze continue to record and tour, their legacy still very much extant.

Founding members Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook, lyricist and musical foil respectively, were joined by keyboard player Jools Holland and drummer Paul Gunn in the first incarnation of the group, with Gunn later replaced by Gilson Lavis and Harry Kakoulli added on bass. John Cale produced their debut EP and most of their eponymous first album, before they took control themselves on second LP *Cool For Cats*. It proved a shrewd move as the singles – the title track and *Up The Junction* – set a template that merged kitchen sink narratives and a New Wave sound – both reached No.2 in the UK.

Further hits were culled from *Argybargy* and fourth album *East Side Story* before Holland quit, to be replaced by ex-Roxy Music and Ace alumnus Paul Carrack. It's his vocal that

adorns one of the band's best known and most loved songs, *Tempted*. Carrack himself left soon afterwards.

By 1984, Squeeze had split, only to reform the following year (with Holland) for *Così Fan Tutti Frutti*. The line-up went through several subsequent changes – Difford and Tilbrook remained, and indeed remain, the only constants – but Squeeze continued to release singles and albums of redoubtable quality, enjoying their biggest success Stateside with 1987's *Hourglass*.

They broke up again in 1999, with Difford and Tilbrook embarking on solo projects and, away from music, undertaking charity work. Since reuniting again in 2007, their influence has been acknowledged with a spate of accolades – including an Ivor Novello for Outstanding Contribution To British Music, a Nordoff Robbins Icon Award and a prestigious PRS for Music Heritage Plaque – and by younger artists such as Mark Ronson, Lily Allen and Kasabian.

In 2017, Squeeze issued their 15th studio album, *The Knowledge*, which peaked at No.25 in the UK.

THE MUST-HAVE ALBUMS



SQUEEZE

1978

Essentially flawed

Of course *Squeeze* has many flaws – it's a debut album anchored by an ill-matched producer – but the nature of this collection lies in its inchoate provenance.

John Cale was that producer and it's evident the former Velvet Underground multi-instrumentalist didn't get what made the South London outfit so singular. According to Tilbrook: "He threw out all the songs that we had written. He told us to write new songs."

Unfortunately, Cale's perception of Squeeze differed from that of the band themselves. "He had us doing some awfully strange things," said Chris Difford.

No coincidence then that the standout tracks were produced by Squeeze – the first two singles, *Take Me, I'm Yours* and *Bang Bang*.



COOL FOR CATS

1979

Unromantic knee-tremblers and dodgy geezers

This was more like it. Yes, the synths sound dated, but the songs still stack up. Tilbrook finds his chops and Difford's occasional vocal contributions are full of, ahem, character. And *Cool For Cats* includes the eponymously-titled single, Squeeze's magnum opus, *Up The Junction*, as well as *Goodbye Girl* and *Slap And Tickle*. What's not to love about it?

There's a laddish poetry in Difford's lyrics that would issue a clarion call to future generations of proletarian Brit-poppers, the unromantic knee-tremblers and dodgy geezers recurring motifs in an acutely observed tableau of contemporary culture. PC it isn't, but then good writing, whatever the medium, is about reflection, not correction.



ARGYBARGY

1980

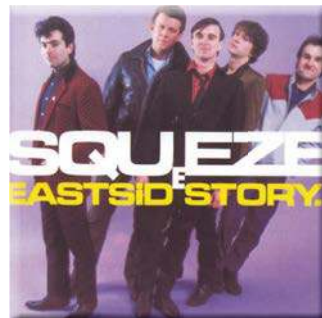
Kitchen sink pop paradigm

Opinion is divided among Squeeze aficionados as to whether *Argybargy* or *East Side Story* represent their crowning glory – let the debate continue outside these pages.

It's certainly a paradigm of kitchen sink pop, evolving the template set by Squeeze and *Cool For Cats* and burnished this time out by sonic nous.

The opening consummate brace of *Pulling Mussels (From The Shell)* and *Another Nail In My Heart*, the former inexplicably failing to breach the Top 40, are a difficult act to follow, but somehow Squeeze manage it on the likes of *Separate Beds*, *Vicky Verky* and the brilliant *If I Didn't Love You*.

Lose Jools Holland's *Wrong Side Of The Moon* and perhaps *Here Comes That Feeling* and *Argybargy* might just settle the argument.



EAST SIDE STORY

1981

Listen up, America!

East Side Story was conceived as a double album, the intention being for Elvis Costello, Dave Edmunds, Nick Lowe and reportedly Paul McCartney to produce one side each. Ultimately, Squeeze settled on one disc, with production duties assigned to Costello and Roger Bechirian (though Edmunds did helm *In Quintessence*).

There are elements of rockabilly, R&B (old school), blue-eyed soul, psychedelia and country, the latter embodied in the Top 10 single (their last), *Labeled With Love*.

Paul Carrack, who replaced Holland on keyboards, takes the lead vocal on *Tempted* and the US finally gave the group a fair hearing. *Creem* magazine lauded *East Side Story* as "an album that harkens back to the halcyon era of English studio experimentation".

AND THE REST...



SWEETS FROM A STRANGER

1982

The cracks were beginning to appear

by the time Squeeze found time in their relentless touring schedule to record *Sweets From A Stranger*. Difford and Tilbrook's relationship was, to coin a euphemism, somewhat strained, while Carrack had, like Holland before him, decided to jump ship.

Against such a backdrop it's perhaps not surprising that the band floundered on their fifth album. The tracks, for the most part, sound tired, with the songwriting duo stranded in a formulaic fog.

Yet even out of the rough they somehow manage to salvage a few diamonds, not least *Black Coffee In Bed* and the sublime *His House Her Home*.



COSI FAN TUTTI FRUTTI

1985

After a brief hiatus, during which

Difford and Tilbrook issued a solo album imaginatively titled *Difford & Tilbrook*, Squeeze returned with *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti*, probably as well known for the sleeve (tea cosy, fan, dessert) as for the songs. Jools Holland was back behind the keys, while Keith Wilkinson took over on bass from John Bentley. He would stay for more than a decade, becoming Squeeze's longest-serving custodian on the instrument.

History hasn't been kind to the production, while the reach of Squeeze's ambition exceeds its grasp, but *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* is still an important entry in the band's canon, presaging a more sophisticated direction.



BABYLON AND ON

1987

Squeeze's second post-reformation

album saw them expand to a six-piece, with the addition of former Soft Boys member Andy Metcalfe – though, like several before him and indeed since, he too would soon depart.

America loved *Hourglass*, with its tongue-twisting chorus, though Difford suspected this success had much to do with the promotional video. "It's been played a lot, and everyone you speak to compliments you on it," he said at the time.

The craftsmanship is scrupulous as ever. Q magazine's Phil Sutcliffe called it right when he praised the "choice of detail, choice of words, the melody and sound that exactly catch the mood".



SOME FANTASTIC PLACE

1993

Paul Carrack was

back, briefly, and Gilson Lavis was gone – the drummer claimed he was fired, Tilbrook claimed he left of his own volition. His place was taken by Pete Thomas of The Attractions.

Failed and failing relationships are a common theme on *Some Fantastic Place*, though Difford and Tilbrook's often combative connection was mediated by their decision to write together in the same space – previously they had worked on songs separately.

Consequently, it makes for a satisfying album, "stuffed with melodic treats and lyrical wit, for consumption by an audience significantly smaller than they deserve", according to Vox.

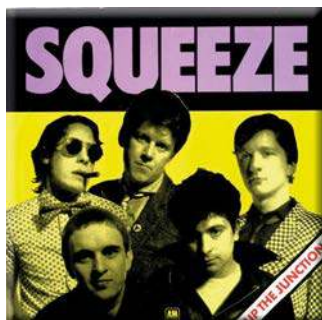
THE ESSENTIAL SINGLES

**COOL FOR CATS**

1979

Deadpan Difford delivery

A rare vocal outing for Chris Difford on Squeeze's fourth single, his Cockney-accented delivery delightfully deadpan. The title is culled from a 1959 Kent Walton-fronted TV show of the same name, the first on British television to regularly showcase rock'n'roll. "I just worked [the title] into some personal experiences within the lyrical content," explained Difford. And in another telly reference, gritty 70s cop show *The Sweeney* – John Thaw, Dennis Waterman *et al* – also gets a mention. Thirteen years after it peaked at No.2 in the British chart, the song was used in an advert for milk.

**UP THE JUNCTION**

1979

Pop drama

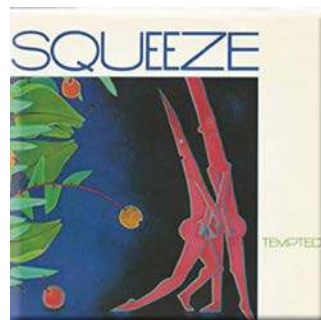
Difford penned *Up the Junction* during an American tour, drawing inspiration from the controversial BBC play of the same name by English playwright Nell Dunn (and later made into a feature film directed by Peter Collinson). "It was written in one sitting," he said of the 16 verses that comprised the original. Remarkably, for a song with no chorus, it reached No.2 in the UK. "The lyric was a story that has no obvious repeats, and I thought it read perfectly as it was," recalled Tilbrook. "I was thinking of something like [Bob] Dylan's *Positively 4th Street* when I wrote the music."

**PULLING MUSSELS (FROM THE SHELL)**

1980

Working class vignette

Difford drew on a childhood memory of holidaying at a caravan park in Margate to depict "the traditional working class get-away-from-it-all weekend". *Pulling Mussels* – slang for sexual intercourse, apparently – features one of Tilbrook's most winsome melodies, composed on a mini-Moog and recorded on a four-track in the middle of the night while he was "smoking a bit of weed". Arguably the only song in pop history to twin Camber Sands in East Sussex with Waikiki in Hawaii. An absolute travesty that it stalled at No.44.

**TEMPTED**

1981

Sweet soul music

Another Chris Difford composition written in transit, this one in a cab en route to Heathrow Airport.

"I just wrote down what I saw and how I felt as we wormed our way through the traffic," he remembered. "I also must have anticipated a good time on tour, as the chorus suggests."

A favourite among the Squeeze faithful, it's memorable mainly for Paul Carrack's sweet, soulful performance (though Tilbrook features in the second verse). For Tilbrook, *Tempted* was a breakthrough song, "when we grew up, really, as a band. When we finished it, I couldn't quite believe it was us."

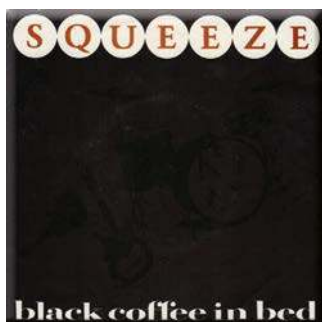
**LABELLED WITH LOVE**

1981

Country classic

The story concerns the end of a relationship after the Second World War. Difford had been reading "about American soldiers in Britain who married English girls and whisked them off their feet to the States". The ending here isn't quite so happy.

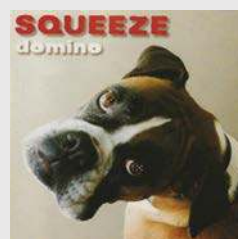
Tilbrook credited producer Elvis Costello for "broadening my knowledge of country music", adding, "It was one of those barriers you cross when you think something is square and horrible, but then discover it has a heart beating inside."

**BLACK COFFEE IN BED**

1982

Tilbrook mimics Carrack

A coffee stain on his notebook influenced Difford's lyric "of loss and regret" on *Black Coffee In Bed*. Like *Tempted*, it's another exercise in soul, though Tilbrook felt it lacked the presence of Carrack. "Without Paul's voice it didn't sound right," he judged, a little harshly. "We recorded a great demo, but we really fucked it up for the record. My vocal is mannered and I can't stand to listen to it now." He did acknowledge that backing singers Costello and Paul Young were "the icing on the cake".

ONLY FOR THE BRAVE**DOMINO** 1998

Released independently, *Domino* was denounced by both Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook as a weak effort marred by time constraints and increasing friction between the two songwriters. It was their first record not to make the UK albums chart. The band split soon afterwards.

**NEED TO KNOW**

- The double-tracked keyboard parts on *Così Fan Tutti Frutti* were impossible to recreate live, so Squeeze co-opted Jools Holland's younger brother Chris to help them out in that context.
- After Jools permanently quit the band in 1990, they used a series of session players – among them, Bruce Hornsby (of The Range), who, by then, had already won two Grammy Awards.
- In 2010, Squeeze released

Spot the Difference, on which they re-recorded new versions of older songs. They invited fans to "spot the difference" in the revamped renditions.

- Squeeze supported Blondie on their first British appearance in Bournemouth – the year was 1977. Twenty-two years later, they warmed up for the New Yorkers on another UK tour. "I suppose that sums up our career, really," quipped Tilbrook.

THE MUST-WATCH VIDEOS

COOL FOR CATS

youtu.be/uJ2cEc_TCH8

Filmed in John Lennon's old house, Tittenhurst Park near Ascot, the set-up is conventional enough – the band do a decent job of lip-synching, while a pair of luridly sun-spectacled girlies gyrate enthusiastically around them, commandeering the mic and hamming it up on the chorus trills. It's all very engaging.

"I was excited to be on TV at that point in my career and sniff what fame was like, and to be in John Lennon's house, which was obviously an incredible experience," said Chris Difford.

Squeeze didn't take to the video medium with as much gusto as their contemporaries, but Difford acknowledged its importance in giving them a leg-up internationally, declaring, "MTV helped take us through the roof."



UP THE JUNCTION

youtu.be/RQciegmLPAo

Same location – Lennon's former pile, the production moving lock, stock and barrel to the kitchen for a change of scenery – same day, different song.

"It was an afterthought from the guy who was producing the *Cool For Cats* video to just go ahead and do another one that day, seeing as how we were there anyway. You'll notice that the girls in the *Up The Junction* video are the same ones as in the *Cool For Cats* one."

An impossibly young Glenn Tilbrook stares down the lens profoundly, Difford swaps his leather jacket for a black tee and fetching white scarf combo, Gilson Lavis looks tough behind the drums and the aforementioned girls – including Michelle Collins, who would later play Cindy Beale in *EastEnders* – busy themselves doing the chores.



BLACK COFFEE IN BED

youtu.be/pUx5z9O2ZGk

Given how rudimentary their previous promos were, Squeeze pulled out, if not all, certainly several stops for *Black Coffee In Bed*, directed by Steve Barron.

"I think he was kind of rehearsing with us," said Difford. "The amount of make-up we had on made us look like Madame Tussauds models."

Whatever about his aesthetic reservations, the band certainly do scrub up nicely. Their gritty South London roots are given a glossy makeover that makes them far more compelling than the romantic nonsense going on behind them, which, like the rest of us, Difford didn't pay much attention to.

"I always thought that videos were just a commercial way of selling your song, really. I didn't take the narrative or the stories into consideration."



HOURLASS

youtu.be/dpc8uZtKn7A

Shot over two days in a studio at London Bridge, and directed by Adrian Edmondson of *The Young Ones* with a little help from Jools Holland, this elaborate video uses various optical illusions and surprising images inspired by the surrealist movement, particularly the art of Salvador Dali.

It's a delightfully absurd promo, with its slanting rooms and miniature doors and oversized telephones and melting clocks and bendy guitars. A real hoot.

The budget was bigger than Squeeze were used to – Difford reckoned the whole thing cost them over £100,000, big bucks in those days. But evidently, it was money well spent as *Hourglass* secured significant airplay on MTV and won an MTV Video Music Award for Best Special Effects. Who'd have thought?



The story concerns the end of a relationship after the Second World War. Difford had been reading "about American soldiers in Britain who married English girls and whisked them off their feet to the States". The ending here isn't quite so happy.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Squeeze released their 17th album, *The Knowledge*, in 2017, with a line-up including keyboardist Stephen Large, percussionist Steve Smith, drummer Simon Hanson and Yolanda Charles on bass.

Tilbrook described it as "our best ever record", while for Difford it affirmed "the love we still have as songwriters and for

each other". Following an extensive tour to promote the collection, Squeeze entered another sabbatical, though Difford and Tilbrook regularly play solo. In late 2018, Tilbrook did a series of dates promoting awareness of, and eliciting donations for, the charitable Trussell Trust, which runs some 420 food banks throughout the UK.

"PLAYING BACK THE ALBUM, I CAN FEEL THE LOVE WE STILL HAVE AS SONGWRITERS, AND FOR EACH OTHER"

LISTEN UP!

We've picked 20 of the choicest cuts from Squeeze's 41-year recording career...

1 Up The Junction

Pop music's *The Wednesday Play*.

2 Tempted

Blue-eyed soul masterpiece.

3 Pulling Mussels (From The Shell)

Seaside humour.

4 Cool For Cats

Parklife precursor.

5 Labelled With Love

Pure country pathos.

6 Black Coffee In Bed

Breaking up is hard to do.

7 Another Nail In My Heart

New Wave barfly anthem.

8 Slap And Tickle

Ooh, Matron!

9 Take Me I'm Yours

How could we refuse?

10 When The Hangover Strikes

Channelling Frank Sinatra.

11 Goodbye Girl

Lavis' percussive apotheosis.

12 Annie Get Your Gun

A&M single on demand.

13 King George Street

Heart-rending domestic drama.

14 Hourglass

Take it to the bridge, quick smart.

15 If I Didn't Love You

...I'd hate you.

16 Is That Love

Barbed and bouncy.

17 Some Fantastic Place

Intensely personal paean to lost pal.

18 Cradle To The Grave

In defence of the welfare state.

19 Heartbreaking World

If only for a rare Jools Holland lead vocal.

20 Maidstone

Fans' favourite.

LADYTRON



BACK TO THE FUTURE

ANALOGUE SYNTH-POP ENIGMAS LADYTRON ARE BACK WITH THEIR FIRST ALBUM IN MORE THAN SEVEN YEARS – AND IT HERALDS A RETURN TO THE CLASSIC 'TRON SOUND OF THEIR BEST WORK. DANIEL HUNT TELLS US HOW THEY FINALLY “FEEL LIKE A BAND AGAIN”. **OLIVER HURLEY**

"H it reset. Okay, we'll make a Ladytron record now." Ladytron founding member, guitarist and vintage synth enthusiast Daniel Hunt is explaining the process involved in creating the group's new, self-titled album – their first since 2011's *Gravity The Seducer*.

"It was a lot more straightforward to make this record because there was no chronology, we weren't following anything. We just put together a load of material and then we connected the stuff that worked best together as a group of tracks. It was really quite straightforward to make and it feels freer as a result."

All of which is, frankly, excellent news for fans of beguiling retro-future alt-pop. There's a confidence and sense of purpose to Ladytron's new album that marks a return to the essence of what makes their best work so compelling. With its richly layered analogue synths, haunting vocals and enigmatic lyrics – not to mention a dash of My Bloody Valentine-infused atmospherics – this is in many ways the archetypal Ladytron album, a record that is both out of time and completely of the moment.

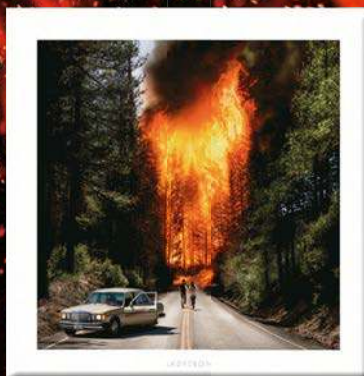
So, what took so long? "We intended to take a break after *Gravity The Seducer*, it just ended up being twice as long as we anticipated," says Hunt. "It had been an album every two years, something like that, and tours in-between and everything else. But there were also big changes in our personal lives: having families, I moved to São Paulo, Reuben moved to Chicago, and things like that."

While Hunt and fellow synth botherer Reuben Wu both now live across the Atlantic, the band's other members have remained in the UK: Mira Aroyo (vocals, synths) in London and Helen Marnie (lead vocals, synths) in Glasgow. Hunt says their disparate locations have had little effect on how they work together.

"I came over from Brazil to work on the new record maybe four or five times. It's not that different to when one of us is in London, one's in Liverpool, one's in Milan, whatever. The flights are more expensive but that's basically the biggest difference. You're working independently, you send things around, you collaborate and you get together and you work in the studio together."

He does concede that there's a certain feeling of disconnection in being across hemispheres that you have to account for when you're collaborating. But rehearsing for a short run of three UK shows that took place in November made them "feel like a band again".

The group decided to begin making a new album in July 2016. "Obviously we couldn't say anything



about it. In a sense, the break was not as long as it looked, it's just that we spent two years writing and getting things together. There was a period where we really wanted to tell everyone what we were doing but we couldn't, and that was probably the most frustrating part of it. It was a massive relief to actually announce that we were doing a new record."

As its eponymous title suggests, the new record – the group's sixth – is Ladytron at their most commanding. In many ways, it feels like a continuation of their best albums, picking up where 2005's brooding *Witching Hour* and 2008's brilliant *Velocifero* left off. Hunt says simply, "It's quite intense." Its first two singles, *The Animals* and *The Island*, bring together Marnie's distinctive vocals with banks of sweeping analogue synths and beautiful melodies, all dragged along by a palpable undercurrent of anxiety, as if something untoward is perpetually about to take place.

Then there's the assertive electro-stomp of opening track *Under The Fire*, and the album's noir-pop centrepiece *Deadzone*, all arpeggiated minor chords and staccato minimalism. It's the comeback album Ladytron needed to make: confident and catchy, with a depth that rewards repeated listens.

It is, I put it to Hunt, classic Ladytron. "This is how we hear it as well," he agrees. "I think a lot of it is Helen's voice. We're in a privileged position that we can do that – that we can make a record and people recognise it."

BUDGET BEGINNINGS

It all started, as it so often does, with a Casio keyboard. Ladytron's debut single, *He Took Her To A Movie*, recorded on a budget of £50, was released in July 1999. It featured vocals from Lisa Eriksson (this was before Marnie or Aroyo joined) and was recorded, recalls Hunt, with "MIDI going into one really old Casio keyboard. There were two different sounds, both off the same instrument. And then it has a live bass and guitar, and a drum machine."

"It was recorded when we weren't quite a band. I recorded that with

***He Took Her To A Movie* was the band's first single and featured guest vocals from Lisa Eriksson, later of US electronic duo Techno Squirrels**



STRAIGHT TO VIDEO

They're not your usual pop promos. Instead, the first two videos that Ladytron have released of songs from their new album are more akin to short films, with an impressive sense of ambition and verve.

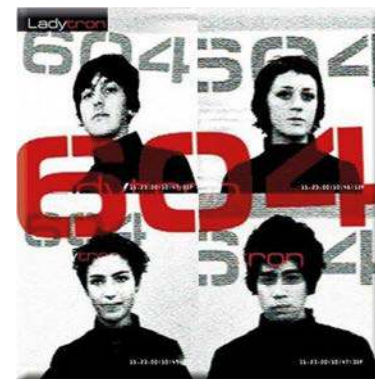
The Animals ❶ (youtu.be/wmeg3SVHb_U) follows a group of young people on an eventful night out in São Paulo – the adopted home town of Ladytron's Daniel Hunt – and based on his unfinished novel. "I wrote the screenplay and gave it to the director, my friend Fernando Nogari, and then we developed it," he says.

"The way that video looks is very familiar to anyone in Brazil. In São Paulo they would look at that and it would be completely unremarkable. Outside, people don't perceive Brazil like that. People just think of beaches, favelas and rainforests, and this is the kind of urban reality. It's about the cultural wars going on that we face now in Brazil. That video is closer to the band than people might realise."

The film for *The Island* ❷ (youtu.be/cXu0zuOKQ2A) is another proposition entirely, a dark sci-fi tale in which a humanoid figure escapes from a laboratory and sees the outside world for the first time, before being tracked down by hazmat suit-clad lab employees. The dénouement is genuinely shocking. "That video, I love it," says Hunt. "I cried the first time I saw it."

Hunt says the band plan to make further mini self-contained films for songs from the new album. "We're all frustrated movie directors."

© Maria-Loureira



The US cover for the band's debut album, *604*. Its title came from the area code for British Columbia.



Ladytron love the autumn.
From left to right: Helen
Marnie, Daniel Hunt,
Mira Aroyo and Reuben Wu

"AS SOON AS THE SOFTWARE AND THE COMPUTERS WERE POWERFUL ENOUGH, SUDDENLY WE COULD MAKE ALL THIS STUFF OF OUR DREAMS. IT WAS SO QUICK – IN A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS WHAT WAS POSSIBLE COMPLETELY CHANGED."

DANIEL HUNT

stuff of our dreams. It was so quick – in a period of six months what was possible completely changed. That's really how it started."

This miscellany of second-hand synths formed the core of the group's sound. "When the band started, you didn't go, 'I think we should do this kind of sound,' it was the keyboards we had and obviously we knew it had novelty to it," says Hunt. "So it was like, 'Okay, we'll just have a mono synth and a poly synth,' an MS-20 [a monophonic analogue synthesizer originally released by Korg in 1978] or something like that. We didn't buy anything to make that happen, it was already there."

"Suddenly you could create something viable at home. Now it's taken for granted, it's how most people make music. But at that time there was this moment where suddenly you could do everything on your computer."

He Took Her To A Movie was followed by a trio of EPs – *Miss Black And Her Friends*, *Commodore Rock* and *Mu-Tron* – which went on to form the basis of the group's 2001 debut album *604*. Its clangy, spare sound resulted in the four-piece being lumped in with the short-lived electroclash scene, much to their bemusement.

I tell Hunt that I've always seen Ladytron as an alternative group, albeit one that just uses synths instead of guitars. "I think that's what we always were," he agrees. "Maybe when we started, there might have been some confusion about what we were, because of the instrumentation or whatever. But that's where we come from."

SMACK MY WITCH UP

Their second album, *Light & Magic* (2002), added more texture to the pared-back synths of *604* and marked a significant step forward in the songwriting. It also featured one of the great electronic songs of the era, *Seventeen*, a modern morality lesson in just four repeated lines: "They only want you when you're 17/ When you're 21 you're no fun/ They take a Polaroid and let you go, say they'll let you know, so come on."

By their third album, *Witching Hour*, Ladytron arrived at what is now their trademark sound, and the record is a tour de force of evocative alt-pop – see *International Dateline* or, what has since become their best-known song, *Destroy Everything You Touch*. "With the first record, we were still making steps forward and I think those steps continued until the third record. By the third album, we said, 'Okay, we know what we're doing now.' We were more in control," says Hunt.

"There was a big change because we'd been on the road for a long time and we were chomping at the bit to make a new record. We had so many ideas after being away and we wanted to get straight in and record it. *Witching Hour* was actually ready a year earlier than it came out, it was just label stuff."

"It was definitely a big shift – not stylistic, that would be a misunderstanding – not because it had live bass and live instruments on it, it was just that we had so many more ideas. A catalyst for that was from doing this big long tour and being exposed to so many other things."

Lisa and she had her own thing and she moved off to the US [Eriksson went on to form electronic two-piece Techno Squirrels]. But we had this song. It sounded good, so we just kept it. We put it out as a single but, by the time that came out, we already had half an album coming along with the actual line-up of the band. So that's a little oddity really, that tune."

Still, the end result, with Eriksson's dispassionate vocal line and a perfect-in-its-simplicity keyboard part lifted from Kraftwerk's *The Model*, was enough to convince Hunt that he was on to something, having spent years accumulating battered old synthesizers from a huge car boot sale that took place by the ventilation shaft of the Mersey tunnel in Liverpool. Hunt once described it as "a bit like Bartertown in *Mad Max*".

"I spent a long time, eight or nine years before the band started, if I saw any kind of keyboard instrument going cheap, I would just buy it," he says. "So I had quite a lot of stuff but it was before the democratisation of recording technology. There was not a lot we could do with them until we all had hard disk recording, which only really happened in about '97. As soon as the software and the computers were powerful enough, suddenly we could make all this



"WE'RE IN A REALLY LUCKY POSITION WHERE WE'VE MADE OUR SIXTH RECORD AND IT'S COMING OUT AND WE NEVER NEEDED TO COMPROMISE. WE NEVER DO."

DANIEL HUNT

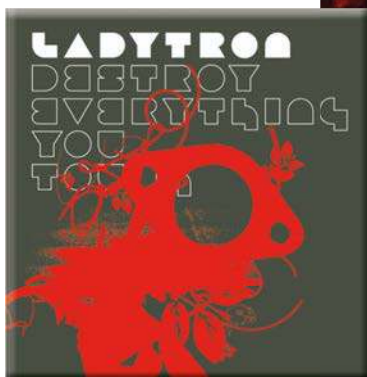
It was so much of stimulus, be it location, interpersonal stuff, not just music."

Destroy Everything You Touch, released as a single in September 2005, reached No.42 – to date, the closest the band have ever come to having a hit. Was there ever a frustration that they never had a breakthrough record?

"It's weird because, at some point, I think we decided we didn't want it," says Hunt. "It's not that you don't want it but you don't want to compromise in some way to achieve that. It's kind of deceptive. We never had a proper crossover hit but we had tracks that were popular. I wouldn't say there's any frustration, only in terms of there were a couple of times when we'd done everything expected of us and we'd delivered and someone else messed it up."

You're reminded of how, for instance, their UK label Telstar went into administration in April 2004, just as they were about to start recording *Witching Hour*, and how their subsequent labels, Rykodisc in the US and Universal/Island in the UK, comprehensively failed to promote the record effectively. "But, to be honest, that stuff's so long ago we don't give a shit any more."

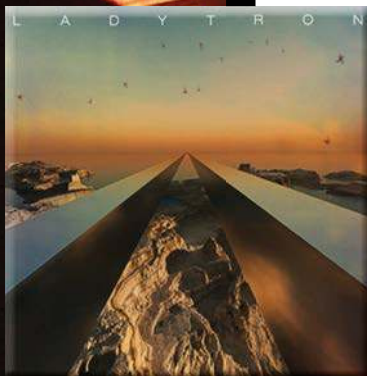
Witching Hour's glossy follow-up, the melancholy *Velocifero*, brought together the harder edges of *Light & Magic* with the layers of instrumentation



The quartet back in 2008. Brian Eno once said of the band: "Ladytron are, for me, the best of English pop music."

In his role as producer, Daniel Hunt has worked with, among others, Christina Aguilera, Marina Gasolina and Lush

© David Ryle/Redferns



© Jim Dyson/Getty Images

of *Witching Hour*. Songs such as *The Lovers* and *Deep Blue* (which builds to a sublime coda – something of a Ladytron trademark) are essential components of the group's back catalogue. Listening to the album again today, over 10 years after its release, it's apparent that it is a minor masterpiece. "*Velocifero* was very intense and very compressed and very noisy – I really like it," says Hunt.

All the while, Ladytron toured incessantly, playing with groups such as Soulwax, Franz Ferdinand, Nine Inch Nails, Interpol and The Faint, although they turned down a world tour supporting Marilyn Manson as they wanted to get in the studio to record *Witching Hour*.

While largely remaining a cult concern in the UK – albeit one that is able to play venues the size of the Roundhouse in London – they built up a significant international following, thanks to extensive gig itineraries that have taken in Europe, the United States, China, Central and South America, Canada, Russia and Australia.

LIFE TAKES OVER

Their final album before the hiatus, *Gravity The Seducer*, was in parts a far more downtempo and introspective affair than its predecessors. Hunt says that, following *Velocifero* and *Witching Hour*, "We wanted to have something different. At one point it was going to be two records. There was going to be this very sedate, very atmospheric record, and another one accompanying it, which was going to be more upbeat. And what happened was we ended up combining the ideas into one record."

They continued touring until the end of 2011, after which, as Hunt puts it, "Life took over." During their time away from the 'Tron, all the group's members had their own projects. Helen Marnie – billed simply as Marnie – released two solo albums. Reuben Wu focused on his work as a photographer, and his eerie, otherworldly landscapes won him commissions from clients such as Apple and Google. Mira Aroyo, who had a daughter in 2012, has been featured in various musical collaborations and worked

as a producer on a number of documentaries (including BBC One's recent *Take That And Us*).

And Hunt continued to create music – he produced Marnie's debut album *Crystal World*, co-produced the comeback EP by Lush with Jim Abbiss (who produced both *Witching Hour* and Ladytron's new album, and was nominated for a Grammy for his work on Adele's 21), co-wrote the scores for the films *Would You Rather* and *The Executrix*, and has worked with the Brazilian singer Lia Paris. "A few years ago I put the brakes on any other collaborations because I was working on the new Ladytron album," he says.

So what's next for the band? Will it be another seven years till the next album? "I don't think it's going to be that long!" says Hunt. "To go to this amount of effort to get all this put together again, we're definitely not going to wait that long."

"We're really lucky to be in a position where we've made our sixth record and it's coming out, and we never needed to compromise. We never do." ■

● Ladytron's eponymous album is released by !K7 on 15 February and reviewed on page 84

ON THE ROAD

Ladytron's extensive touring schedules have taken in everywhere from China to Central America. If you ask Daniel Hunt if such adventurous global jaunts have ever resulted in any particularly hairy moments, he will tell you that one particular show stands out. It took place at Teatro Lux in Bogotá, Colombia, in December 2006.

"At the time, nobody would go to Colombia because they were told it was too dangerous," he says. "And I was, 'No, we'll do it.'" The show, says Hunt, was amazing. Many fans were wearing homemade Ladytron masks and some had even sprayed Ladytron graffiti around the city.

But unbeknown to the 'Tron, the Colombian military had been demanding bribes from the promoters, and the only thing that kept the show going was the fact that the son of Colombian president Álvaro Uribe was in attendance. Ladytron's performance was followed by a DJ set but, as soon as Uribe's son left the venue, the army shut down the event.

"I remember just hearing the music stop and I wandered out of the dressing room and saw the DJ in tears coming off the stage," says Hunt. "And there was just a line of soldiers there with rifles at the front of the stage."

Ladytron made it out of the venue and only found out the full story the following day. "Everyone plays in Colombia now but, at that time, things were a little bit edgier," says Hunt, before adding, with some degree of understatement, "but we had an interesting experience."





Relax FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD (ZTT)

One of those remarkable moments where

pop subversiveness genuinely rattles the fusty establishment, Frankie's debut single remains an

80s landmark. Producer Trevor Horn first heard an early incarnation on *The Tube* and eventually transformed the track by "putting the Donna Summer element into it" as he explained to *Classic Pop* last year. The mash-up of a "slightly punky band from Liverpool" (his words, not ours) with cutting-edge dance music made for a total triumph. Allegedly, Holly Johnson was the only member of the band to officially perform on it as Horn's collaborators, including Art Of Noise's JJ Jeczalik, reconfigured the backing track in its entirety. Frankie's ideas man Paul Morley envisaged the band's first three singles would deal with the biggest themes of all – sex, war and religion. As an opening shot, *Relax* took on the sex angle, going on to shift two million copies and becoming the UK's seventh biggest-selling single of all time.

Break My Stride MATTHEW WILDER (EPIC)

Matthew Wilder's time in the frontline pop limelight may have been fleeting – this was his only major hit – but he has since gone on to great success behind the scenes, working as a producer with the likes of No Doubt (he helmed their mega-selling *Tragic Kingdom* LP), Miley Cyrus, Kelly Clarkson and Christina Aguilera. Previous to his own 15 minutes of fame via this perky synth-based ode to positive thinking, Wilder had been a member of Greenwich Village folkies Matthew & Peter as well as singing backing vocals for the indomitable Bette Midler and Rickie Lee Jones.

Buoyed by the success in the singles countdown of

Break My Stride, Wilder's album *I Don't Speak*

The Language rose to a respectable No.49 in the Billboard charts.



CLASSIC

POP

TOP TEN

WEEK ENDING

11 FEB 1984

FRANKIE, MADONNA AND CYNDI LAUPER LAUNCH THEIR CHART CAREERS WITH THREE CLASSIC SINGLES WHILE ONE-HIT WONDERS FICTION FACTORY AND MATTHEW WILDER GET THEIR DAY IN THE SUN

STEVE HARNELL

1 (1) Relax

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD (ZTT)
14TH WEEK ON CHART

2 (4) Radio Ga Ga

QUEEN (EMI)
2ND WEEK ON CHART



Radio Ga Ga QUEEN (EMI)

Is this a prime example of biting the hand that feeds? Queen, who virtually invented the pop promo with

Bohemian Rhapsody, here bemoan the rise of MTV and its ilk as radio bowed down to the visual form. MTV wasn't the only target here, though. Drummer Roger Taylor's love letter to the radio of his youth was a general harrumph at the televisual age in general which championed visuals over music and the spoken word. Moving on from a working title of *Radio Caca* inspired by his young son (good move, Rog), Taylor referenced two iconic moments in radio in the lyrics. There's Orson Welles' panic-inducing *The War Of The Worlds* serial ("Through wars of worlds invaded by Mars") and a patriotic Winston Churchill speech in June 1940 ("You've yet to have your finest hour"). The song, of course, came with an extravagant sci-fi promo that features scenes from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em...



Girls Just Want To Have Fun CYNDI LAUPER (PORTRAIT)

Lauper's signature song started off life as a slice of snotty punkish pop by new waver Robert

Hazard. When Cyndi got her hands on it she polished this up into gleaming pop perfection, clarifying its melody and turning it into a feminist anthem. The video for Lauper's debut single, which featured Cyndi's own mother as well

as pro wrestler Lou Albano, won a Grammy despite costing less than \$35,000 to make, and its accompanying album *She's So Unusual* also included classic Cyndi cuts such as *Time After Time* and the controversial ode to onanism, *She Bop*. A giant climber in the UK singles charts, it entered at a rather demure No.50 before eventually peaking at No.2. *Girls...* made the Top 10 in 25 countries around the world, reaching the summit in 10 of those.

CLASSIC
POP

2018

READER AWARDS

THE WAIT IS OVER AND THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN! WE ASKED CLASSIC POP READERS TO SINGLE OUT THEIR FAVOURITES OVER THE PAST YEAR AND YOU RESPONDED IN YOUR THOUSANDS ACROSS OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS. THE RESULTS ARE IN...

STEVE HARNELL

We know that the *Classic Pop* faithful aren't backward in coming forward when it comes to their musical opinions and once again you've done us proud with the sheer volume of votes in our latest Reader Awards.

You got in touch in your thousands for the second annual vote celebrating the great and the good on planet pop.

Rick Astley is this year's star of the show, coming away with the spoils in three categories. Both Kylie Minogue and Johnny Marr also put in strong showings in each of the categories they were included in. Despite not releasing any new studio albums this year, fans of Duran Duran and Gary Numan made sure their favourites got an honourable mention, too – and far be it from us to stand in their way.

Once again, we've kept this year's categories straightforward – there are awards for best group, solo artist, video, album, reissue, single, video and book. Read on to find out who has come out on top in our hotly-contested vote. ■



CLASSIC
POP
2018 READER AWARDS
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOLO ARTIST OF THE YEAR

"RICK ASTLEY ALL THE WAY!
HE'S DONE US PROUD
WITH ANOTHER GREAT ALBUM
IN 2018. RICK'S SUCH A
TALENTED ARTIST, HE'S STILL GOT
A BRILLIANT VOICE AFTER
ALL THESE YEARS – WHICH
IS NOW MATCHED WITH
EQUALLY BRILLIANT SONGS.
HIS 2018 TOUR WAS BY
FAR THE BEST I THINK.
RICK DESERVES TO BE NO.1.
#BEAUTIFULLIFE"
EMESE NAGY



CLASSIC POP
2018 READER AWARDS
★★★★★
GROUP OF THE YEAR

GROUP OF THE YEAR

1 CULTURE CLUB

2 CHIC

3 SIMPLE MINDS

"AFTER AN AMAZING TOUR LAST YEAR, PLUS THEIR NEW MATERIAL, DEFFO CULTURE CLUB ♥♥♥"
MICHELLE DUFFY

"DEFINITELY KYLIE. FANTASTIC TOUR THIS YEAR. LOVE GOLDEN."
LUCY DUMBLETON

"CHIC ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ACT ON EARTH. PROTECT NILE RODGERS ...PROTECT THE KING! #KINGOFDANCE"
TONY MONTREAL

SOLO ARTIST OF THE YEAR

1 RICK ASTLEY

2 KYLIE MINOGUE

3 KIM WILDE

"KIM WILDE HAD A FANTASTIC ALBUM OUT AND A GREAT TOUR AROUND EUROPE IN 2018"
ANDERS CHRISTIAN STORM

"SIMPLE MINDS BY A MILE. FABULOUS NEW ALBUM. SUCCESSFUL TOUR IN UK, EUROPE AND THE USA. AFTER 40 YEARS, STILL BANGING OUT GREAT TUNES. ONE OF THE MOST UNDERRATED AND INFLUENTIAL BANDS OF ALL TIME."
GARY COOPER

HONOURABLE MENTION

HONOURABLE MENTION
GARY NUMAN

"73 CONCERTS IN 2018 WITH A SELL OUT AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL, A MAN TOTALLY AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME!"
IAN CHENDERSON

DURAN DURAN
"I VOTE FOR DURAN DURAN OF COURSE - I DEMAND THEY BE ADDED!"
KATE TERRY

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- 1 KYLIE MINOGUE – GOLDEN
- 2 TRACEY THORN – RECORD
- 3 JOHNNY MARR – CALL THE COMET



**CLASSIC
POP**
2018 READER AWARDS
★★★★★★★★★
ALBUM OF THE YEAR



"GOLDEN BY KYLIE. SHE TOOK A RISK IN TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT, EVEN HER LOYAL FANBASE WERE CONCERNED ON LEARNING OF ITS DIRECTION. THEN IT ARRIVED AND EVERYONE LOVED IT. THE SONGS WERE ALSO FANTASTIC LIVE."

ELAINE VON TRAPP UZOAMAKA



SINGLE OF THE YEAR

- 1 RICK ASTLEY – SHE MAKES ME
- 2 KYLIE MINOGUE – DANCING
- 3 JOHNNY MARR – HI HELLO

**CLASSIC
POP**
2018 READER AWARDS
★★★★★★★★★
SINGLE OF THE YEAR

"RICK ASTLEY'S SINGLE SHE MAKES ME IS SUCH A GREAT LOVE SONG ♥"
ALIES VAN ROOIJEN-VISSER

BEST OF THE REST



**CLASSIC
POP**
2018 READER AWARDS

VIDEO OF THE YEAR

VIDEO OF THE YEAR

1 RICK ASTLEY – SHE MAKES ME

"She Makes Me shows Rick's sense of humour. I laughed a lot when I saw it first!"
GEMA OVEJERO

2 KYLIE MINOGUE – DANCING

"Great video to a great song ♥" DOUG GRAY

3 JANELLE MONÁE – PYNK

"A catchy pop song with a colourful video that celebrates sex, desire and the delicacy of being female." SARAH GORDON



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POP**
2018 READER AWARDS

REISSUE OF THE YEAR

REISSUE OF THE YEAR

1 PET SHOP BOYS – FURTHER LISTENING

"Shows why Pet Shop Boys are the innovative pets of techno-pop."
MIGUEL IGNACIO IGNACIO SASIAIN

2 KATE BUSH – REMASTERED

"A quality vinyl collection that highlights the beauty of Kate's soundscapes." BRIAN DUFFIN

3 YAZOO – THREE/FOUR PIECES

"Great remastering and nice to finally hear the radio sessions in such amazing quality!" ALAN BOYLE

BOOK OF THE YEAR

1 JAKE SHEARS – BOYS KEEP SWINGING

"I devoured this honest biography in a matter of days." MELANIE DAWTON

2 LUCY O'BRIEN

MADONNA: LIKE AN ICON

"Immaculately researched. I couldn't put it down."
CAROLINE COOPER

3 BRETT ANDERSON – COAL BLACK MORNINGS

"An honest account of a working-class lad – this book is at times gritty, sad, uplifting and laugh-out-loud funny."

CHELSEA FILEWOOD



**CLASSIC
POP**
2018 READER AWARDS

BOOK OF THE YEAR



**CLASSIC
POP**
2018 READER AWARDS

LIVE ACT OF THE YEAR

LIVE ACT OF THE YEAR

1 ERASURE

2 GARY NUMAN

3 JOHNNY MARR

"WE WENT TO ALL THREE SAN FRANCISCO SHOWS AND EACH ONE WAS SIMILAR, YET DIFFERENT. I HAVE BEEN TO EVERY US TOUR SINCE WILD. IN MY OPINION, THESE TWO GUYS (AND TWO GALS) AREN'T JUST ANY LIVE ACT – THEY'RE THE LIVE ACT."

DAVID SCOTT
KELLER



© Naomi Dryden-Smith

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"I HAD ALWAYS WRITTEN SONGS
FROM A YOUNG AGE: 10, 11,
EVEN YOUNGER. I JUST THOUGHT
IT WAS NORMAL. THE SERIOUS PART
OF WRITING SONGS PROBABLY
STARTED AS A TEENAGER."

Tanita Tikaram

FOR ALL THESE YEARS

TANITA TIKARAM BECAME A BROODING TEENAGE SUPERSTAR WITH ANCIENT HEART. WITH THAT DEBUT NOW RE-RELEASED IN A 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION, SHE TAKES CLASSIC POP THROUGH A CAREER THAT HAS BOTH SEEN HER BECOME EVERYBODY'S ANGEL AND ENCOUNTER ELEVEN KINDS OF LONELINESS.

SEAN EGAN

Winter 1988. Worming its way past the glistening profferings of Yaz, Kylie, Brother Beyond and Salt-N-Pepa was a single with an intriguing title and a snaking, oboe-tinged melody purred in an exquisitely androgynous voice by someone who, for good measure, visually resembled a distaff Elvis Presley. *Twist In My Sobriety* was without question the most mysterious sound of the season. It is also pretty much a microcosm of Tanita Tikaram's exotic and elusive career since.

Although her parents are of Bornean and Fijian extraction, Tikaram is suffused with Englishness, partly because she was a British Army brat, partly because her family settled in Basingstoke when she was 12.

Being brought up adjacent to firing ranges, however, didn't inhibit artistic impulses for either her or her brother (Ramon is a well-known actor). "I had always written songs from a young age: 10, 11, even younger," she explains. "I just thought it was normal. The serious part of writing songs probably started as a teenager." Tikaram was attracted to the idea of the singer-songwriter because "that's a very romantic figure." She cites Suzanne Vega, Joni Mitchell and Van Morrison as artists

she was aware of. Luckily for her ambitions to join their ranks, it turned out that Tikaram could hold a note. She ratcheted up the effect of her husky voice by spurning her natural RP tones for something Dylanesque.

A certain matter-of-factness attended the way Tikaram landed a recording career. A single showcase performance at the Mean Fiddler in London had major labels knocking on her door, with WEA the company that won out. "When you're young, you just think that's what happens,"

Tikaram shrugs. She was, however, excited at being able to select a wish-list backing group that included Tom Waits guitarist Marc Ribot, Dexys Midnight Runners' Helen O'Hara, Jackson Browne sideman David Lindley on violin and singer-songwriter Paul Brady on mandolin.

Said musicians would deepen and widen the songs that would appear on her debut album.

Ancient Heart, unusually, had two producers, Peter Van Hooke and Zombies founder Rod Argent. "Between them, they had definite roles, though they worked all the time together," she says. "They were the nicest people you could make your first record with. They were so excited about the process. It was a lovely summer."

The album kicked off with *Good Tradition*, an uptempo track



"I HEARD RECENTLY PATTI SMITH SINGING TWIST IN MY SOBRIETY. WHEN YOU HEAR AN ARTIST OF THAT STATURE SINGING ONE OF YOUR SONGS, YOU CAN'T REALLY ARGUE WITH THAT."

Tanita Tikaram

POP UP For most of her career, the public assumed that Tikaram's songs of romance were about men. However, she has acknowledged in recent years that her current partner is multimedia artist Natacha Horn. Cryptic lyrics are one thing, but it's notable in retrospect how in interviews she always played the 'pronoun game' when discussing relationships ("they" instead of "he" or "she"). Did she feel obliged to veil her sexuality before? "No, not at all. I'm a very private person. I think sometimes it's quite nice not to know a lot about an artist."

unrepresentative of the mellow vibe of what followed. "This is almost a throwaway, but it became a big song," reflects Tikaram. The music has a strong Celtic flavour courtesy of O'Hara, while the lyric addresses the warp and weft of family life. "No, it's not about my family. At the time I was doing English A-level. We were reading *Our Mutual Friend* by Dickens and talking a lot about the family, the fireside and all this symbolism."

Some fine classical guitar from Mitch Dalton embellishes *Cathedral Song*, of which Tikaram explains, "It's about the enormity of love." In retrospect, the composer wishes *Sighing Innocents* had the sort of spikiness associated with adolescence, its subject. "This is a song that maybe I would have produced more roughly," she says. Tikaram is almost embarrassed at the fact that people tell her how much *I Love You* means to them. "It's a very imagined thing. I've never even seen the film *Betty Blue*, which I mention." *World Outside Your Window* assumed an unexpectedly literal meaning. Tikaram notes of British astronaut Helen Sharman: "She took this song with her." The very title of the cinematic *For All These Years* suggests the reflectiveness of someone much older than Tikaram's 19, something that could be said about much of the album. She reasons: "When you're a teenager, you're very open and you're watching lots of interesting cinema, reading interesting books." Mark Isham's flugelhorn part completes the enigmatic soundscape.

SIGNATURE SONG

Twist In My Sobriety was the album's second single. Although nothing like as successful as *Good Tradition* – reaching No.22 compared to the latter's Top 10 chart placing – this suitably elliptical hymn to perplexity has wound up as Tikaram's signature song. But what of the potentially dispiriting fact that, though she may have written better tracks, none will ever be as famous?

"I think you have to just accept your blessings. I heard recently Patti Smith singing the song. When you hear an artist of that stature singing one of your songs, you can't really argue with that."

Tikaram was puzzled by people assuming *Poor Cow* was a commentary on the namesake novel or film. "I hadn't heard of

SWITCHING LABELS



When asked why *The Cappuccino Songs* was her first album not released through WEA, for the only time in the interview, Tikaram's friendly manner switches into something more crisp. "The story was I was

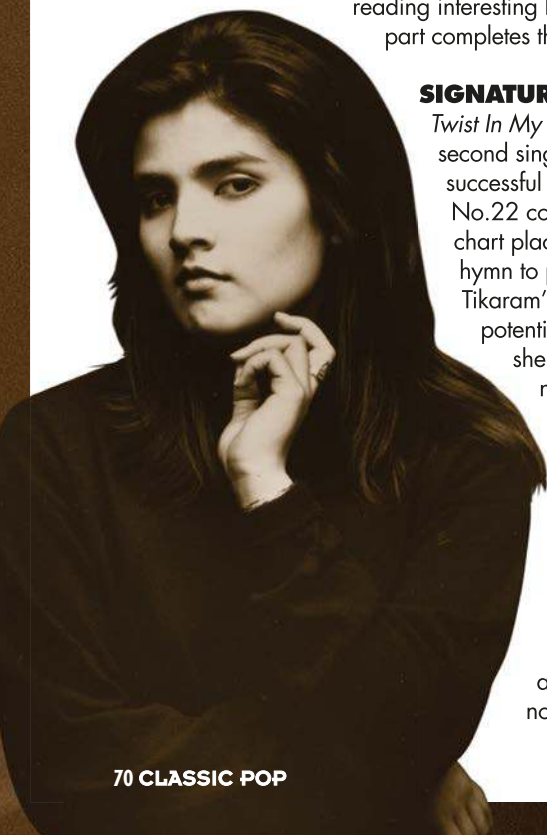
no longer with WEA and I went to another record company." Was it challenging to not have a major label behind her anymore? "No, not really," she offers with equal terseness. In fairness, anybody would be unnerved by the career trajectory she experienced after arriving on the scene with such a big splash. Following *Ancient Heart*, her albums were marked by incrementally fewer sales, clearly to the point where WEA no longer perceived her career as viable for their purposes. Although *The Cappuccino Songs* was issued on a reasonably prominent label – U2's briefly-lived *Mother* – the impression since is of Tikaram rather scrabbling around for outlets, inking deals with a new, unfamiliar, continental-based outfit each time out.

that. It was just about being an awkward young woman who didn't fit in with everybody." She also says: "That's my most Basingstoke song." *He Likes The Sun* is suffused with the soul and blues ingested from Tikaram's father's record collection. For around 10 startling seconds it explodes out of its somnambulant mood into uptempo rock. "Which was a headache for Rod and Pete," Tikaram laughs as she recalls how such mismatching signatures hardly gelled with the rigid quantisation then fashionable in recording. Asked if she has ever wanted to do a whole album of uptempo rock, Tikaram's response indicates that there are limits to her renowned musical adventurism. "Er, no."

The beautifully orchestrated *Valentine Heart* is "a very romantic song," says Tikaram, but adds, "the person in the song is solitary and imagining love." Of intense closer *Preyed Upon*, Tikaram points out: "I spent ages trying to work out whether to spell it 'preyed' or 'prayed'." She is convinced that the obsession with language bequeathed by being an English Lit student helped make her songwriting unusual. "When you are learning with a great teacher and you're reading a lot, you have a sensitivity about language."

Released in September 1988, *Ancient Heart* spent nearly a year on the UK album chart. As it proceeded to become a hit all around the world, it acquired the status of an easy-listening classic, or as Tikaram puts it: "In a certain moment in time, that record did make a very deep connection." She also concedes, "You can't look for that again."

Her follow-up appeared unfussily quickly. "I don't remember that being a difficult second album," she says of *The Sweet Keeper* (1990). "At that period, I wrote very easily. I'm thankful that I was that naïve." Although 1991's *Everybody's Angel* was the final LP utilising the same personnel and producers, Tikaram doesn't see her opening trio as a self-contained section of her career. "Everybody's Angel was slightly different because it really was more live," she says.



Tanita Tikaram is the great-niece of Sir Moti Tikaram, the first ombudsman of independent Fiji. Yes, tell your friends!

By the time of the following year's *Eleven Kinds Of Loneliness*, Tikaram had grown in confidence to the extent of producing the album herself. However, she is not sure it was a wise move. "It's quite difficult to produce yourself 'cos you don't have any distance. I can say I like this particular sound, but I don't know how to achieve it technically."

Lovers In The City (1995) featured a coffee and cream vocal combination, with Jennifer Warnes' backing vocals adorning almost half the tracks. Three years later, *The Cappuccino Songs* took Tikaram in a more electronica direction. This was a consequence of working with Marco Sabiu, a "keyboard wizard" Tikaram had met while recording a new song for her 1996 *Best Of* album. "Everything that you're not, you're actually fascinated by," she explains.

ALL GOOD PEOPLE READ GOOD BOOKS

Her next two albums were released after gaps of seven years apiece. She spent the extended interregnums "hanging out, doing stuff, travelling... When you're doing something from quite a young age, you just question why you do this. Then you come back to it, saying, 'Oh, I know why I did this – 'cos I love it.'"

Even so, turning 30 was a landmark that compelled Tikaram to learn a new instrument and mode of writing for 2005's *Sentimental*. "I never had a great passion for the guitar," she says. "It just happened to be the cheapest instrument when I was growing up. When I discovered the piano, it opened up my sound world."

Having now proven herself via penning several acknowledged classics, Tikaram felt comfortable about sharing composing credit on the Americana-inflected *Can't Go Back* in 2012. However, she is much too modest to put it in those terms, perhaps even to herself. "I feel as I get older it's less about me being the artist and the songwriter... I have a much more idealistic view of music and I think it is about collaboration and working things out." *Closer To The People* (2016) also

comprised co-writes and found her exploring yet further new territory following a reading of *High Times, Hard Times* by Anita O'Day: "It was her autobiography about the jazz life and the drugs and the insanity of being a singer."

Tikaram is currently in the preparation stage for her next album, recording of which begins this month, with Helen O'Hara acting as 'music director'. "I think it's the most exciting thing I've done," Tikaram says. Asked if it's a change in direction, she responds: "Oh yeah!" and laughs uproariously, but then backtracks, before clamming up. "This year I'm 50 so I just wanted to do an album that I absolutely don't care what anyone thinks," she offers. The half-century has provoked a reflectiveness that she states the 30th anniversary of *Ancient Heart* doesn't. "Those songs are still quite close to me. They don't seem 30 years ago. But becoming 50, that's a big one."

The former *wunderkind* is not apprehensive but excited about the milestone. "50 is the new 20," she cheerily insists. ■

● The 30th Anniversary Edition of *Ancient Heart* is out now via Music On CD



Don't Look Back In Anger

WRONGLY PEGGED AS AN 'ANGRY YOUNG MAN', THE EVER-RESTLESS SINGER-SONGWRITER JOE JACKSON HAS DELVED INTO EVERYTHING FROM POWER POP TO JAZZ AND CLASSICAL. NOW HE'S BACK WITH A FRESHLY-MINTED NEW ALBUM AND A TOUR CELEBRATING HIS LAST FOUR DECADES. **DAVID BURKE**

Joe Jackson doesn't strike you as someone who's all that bothered about anniversaries, preferring to remain in the present rather than return to the past. But 40 years after his debut album, *Look Sharp!*, perceptively described by eminent critic Greil Marcus as "clean, fresh and just a bit mean", he's decided to indulge himself in a spot of nostalgia – on his own terms, of course.

Firstly, there's a rather brilliant new release, *Fool*, followed by a spring tour that will mine five albums – each representing a decade – for material. He's also promised to "throw in a couple of songs from other albums and some new covers".

Jackson explains: "When I realised that it was going to be 40 years since the first album, I didn't really know what to do because it was shocking. But then the more I thought about it, the more I reasoned, 'Well, there's no point pretending it's not happening.' So, if we could use it in any way to celebrate the fact that I'm still around, and have a new album coming out, then we might as well. But it's not like I haven't played live in 20 years and it's some big comeback, because I never went anywhere."

Indeed he didn't. Since his 80s chart apogee, Jackson has continued to turn out

an estimable body of work that has strayed from the post-punk zeitgeist of his early releases onto more elevated terrain, including a tribute to jazz great Duke Ellington and a Grammy Award-winning symphony.

So, how does he judge his evolution over the past 40 years?

"I just think I've got better. I mean, in some ways I feel it's undeniable. I'm a much better singer, a much better piano player than when I started. I think I'm a better songwriter as well, but, you know, that's subjective. And you're always up against the nostalgia factor, where people will say, no matter what you do, 'Oh, it's not as good as the first album.' I don't lose sleep over it. I'm very much thinking about what I'm doing now and what I'm going to do next, always."

The eight songs on *Fool* are what he ended up with "after a couple of years of trying out a lot of different ideas". Or, as he puts it more dramatically, "The road to this album is littered with the wrecks of songs and half-songs that didn't make the grade."

Comedy and tragedy are the twin themes that dominate the collection – and both of them seem to coalesce, uncomfortably, in the presidency of one Donald J. Trump. But Jackson, a former resident of and still frequent visitor to, the United States





“It’s not like I haven’t played live
in 20 years and it’s some big comeback,
because I never went anywhere”

JOE JACKSON

won't be drawn on the White House incumbent.

"Regardless of who the President is right now, I think it's very bitterly divided [in America]. That's been going on for quite a while. I don't particularly want to talk about him, to be honest. I don't know why he has to get dragged into every conversation. I think it's more than one person. I think it's kind of become very tribal, in a way. People's attitudes have become very hardened to, 'We're the good guys and they're the bad guys'. It's a shame."

Fool deals in fear and anger, alienation and loss, but also "the things that make life worth living – friendship, laughter and music, or art itself. I couldn't have done this in 1979. I just hadn't lived enough."

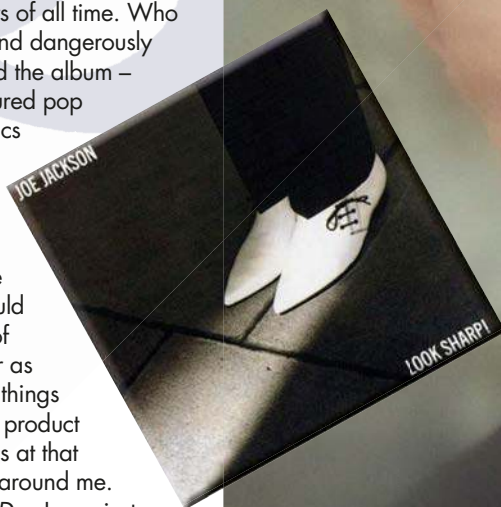
HOT SHOE SHOW

What he was doing in 1979, was releasing *Look Sharp!*, the sleeve of which ranked at No.22 on *Rolling Stone* magazine's 100 greatest covers of all time. Who can forget those white pointy shoes and dangerously creased black slacks? The critics loved the album – NME raved about its "ringing, contoured pop melodies, the jaundiced, sceptical lyrics and the crisp vocals" that recalled Elvis Costello.

What does Jackson hear when he listens – if he listens – to it now?

"What I hear is London, 1978. The first two albums, really, because I would say *I'm The Man* is kind of Part Two of *Look Sharp!*. They kind of go together as one album. Probably they're the only things I've ever done that are very much the product of a time and place and the age I was at that point, being influenced by what was around me. I think by the time I got to *Night And Day* I was just doing my own thing, not really caring about what anyone else was doing.

"They were absolutely what I wanted to do at the time, but I think they were just a little bit contrived in terms of being the right sound for the time. There's a



SHATNER'S COMMON TOUCH

One of the more curious, but predictably contrary, entries in Joe Jackson's CV is a cover of Pulp's *Common People* – with Captain Kirk.

In 2004, Jackson was invited by producer Ben Folds to duet on the track with *Star Trek* alumnus William Shatner for the latter's album, *Has Been*. It's barking mad.

"That was fun," he says. "That came about through Ben. He was arranging and producing the album, and actually did quite a clever job, I think, given what he had to work with – which was Shatner reading his words. But the thing is, Ben put together a lot of very interesting contexts for his voice, with a sort of tongue in cheek where Shatner was in on the joke.

"But it's actually a pretty good album, an enjoyable record, I've got to say. And it was great fun. We recorded it in Nashville. And hanging out with Ben Folds and Bill Shatner, a very funny guy. He was great. He had more energy than anyone else and he was twice the age of everyone else. He'd be the first guy in the studio and the last guy to leave."



"I didn't feel like I was part of a movement, or anything like that. But Graham Parker in particular was an influence."

JOE JACKSON

© John Huba

BROADWAY POLITICS SUCKS

For more than a decade, Joe Jackson has been trying to bring a musical about Dracula creator Bram Stoker to the stage – but now seems resigned that it will never happen.

"There were possibilities in New York, London, Dublin, Houston," he says of the project, on which he collaborated with writer Raymond Hardie and director Judith Dolan.

"We came very close more than once to actually getting a production up and running. At this point it's sort of dead in the water, really. You never know, but between me and my collaborators, the writer and director, management, their contacts etc, we've kind of exhausted everything.

"And even though we got some very major theatre

people liking the piece – Hal Prince, for example, the king of Broadway, really liked it – no one wanted to put up the money and go all the way with it, which, relative to some of the bloated crap that goes out on Broadway, would be a pittance.

"But for someone who doesn't quite get it and thinks it's just a risk, I don't know. It's an unusual piece. I think it's great, but it's unusual. It's not really a Broadway musical."

The saga has been a salient lesson for Jackson – mainly, in the sense "that writing songs for the theatre is not the same as writing songs for an album. I had to gradually learn to think rather differently. I think it's not really my thing, to be honest. But it may still happen, you never know."

fine line here – I wouldn't say they were phoney or anything, but, yeah, that's the most influenced I was by the general vibe at the time.

"If you put those albums together, they make one really strong LP. There are a few tracks that make me cringe, as there is on some of my subsequent stuff, my early material. Less so as I go along."

Lazy journalists lumped him in with Costello, Nick Lowe and Graham Parker as part of a nebulous movement demarcated by guitar, bass, drums and piss and vinegar after 1977, the red-letter year in British music.

"I didn't feel like I was part of a movement, or anything like that. But Graham Parker in particular was an influence. When I heard him I thought, 'Blimey, here's someone who can't sing', in a similar way to how I can't sing, and he managed to make it work, managed to sound pretty good. So maybe if he could do it, I could do it, too. And he had an attitude, a way of praising his own lyrics."

LOOKING SHARP

The punters loved *Look Sharp!*, too, especially its defining single, *Is She Really Going Out With Him?*, which peaked at No.13 in the UK. He regards the song's success as vindication of sorts after years of paying his dues. There was a stint as pianist in a pub next door to a glue factory in his native Portsmouth, a regular gig accompanying a bouzouki player in a Greek restaurant and a detour into cabaret as musical director of the Portsmouth Playboy Club. All of these formative experiences, and more, are brilliantly chronicled by Jackson in his 1999 memoir, *A Cure For Gravity*, which ends before the glory years.



Of course he wasn't an angry young man... Joe Jackson in 1979, the year that *Is She Really Going Out With Him?* became his breakout hit



"By then, I was only 23 or 24, but I'd been making music professionally for quite a long time and had a lot of experience. And it sort of felt like the culmination of this great odyssey, which looking back now seems crazy. It all happened in really quite a short space of time.

"No one was more surprised to me when *Is She Really Going Out*

With Him? became a hit. I knew by the time I was 15, 16, that I was a musician. I didn't expect to make any money, I didn't expect to be particularly successful. I was just hoping I could make enough money that I could keep doing it. That's really all it was. I think it was Walt Disney who was asked, 'Do you make movies to make money?' And he said, 'No, I make money to make movies.'" It was kind of like that. I just wanted to hopefully reach some kind of audience and hopefully not have to go and work in a factory or something."

It's Different For Girls, from *Look Sharp!*'s successor, *I'm The Man*, made the Top 10, peaking at No.5. And these two tracks, along with *Steppin' Out*, are very much his signatures, well known to those who are even

largely unfamiliar with Jackson's oeuvre. "I just think even one hit is more than most people have. The fact that a lot of people aren't so interested in what I'm doing more recently, it happens to most of us, to most artists who stick around for a long time.

"There's a few that become icons and everyone wants to know about them, no matter what. But most of us, the mere mortals, have to deal with that. Where I am now makes more sense to me than being some kind of celebrity, which I never really aspired to."

CONTENTED YOUNG MAN

Success brought with it the unwanted attention of celebrity which was "anathema" to Jackson. "It takes you a while to figure it out. I think for quite a long time I was torn between thinking it was a vindication, but in my more intelligent moments realising that a lot of it was bullshit."

Bullshit of a different kind was perpetuated by the music press, which insisted on characterising him as an angry young man, when Jackson was, in fact, the exact opposite.

"I always thought it was funny. I used to imagine this angry young man – what kind of person would this be? Someone who gets up in the morning, feeling angry, and eats his breakfast angrily? Some people have always missed the humour in [my work].

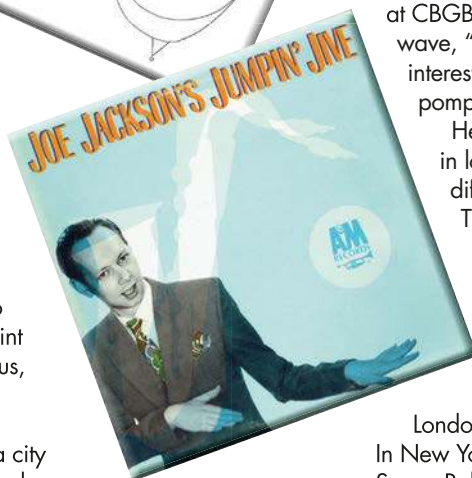
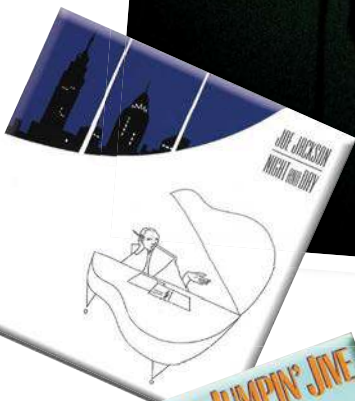
"But they take it more seriously than I do a lot of time, a lot of critics, even to the point of kind of accusing me of being over-serious, which is kind of hilarious to me, coming from critics."

Jackson soon decamped to New York, a city with which he had a "hot love affair" and where,

Jackson expanded into classical music in the late 1990s



© Hiroyuki Ito/Getty Images



at CBGBs, the mecca of new wave, "musically there were people doing very interesting and original things without being pompous or disappearing up their own bums."

He recalls: "I just fell in love with it, and I still am in love with the New York of the early 80s. It's a different place now. I don't like it so much now. That time was very exciting. Compared to now, it was much more free.

"It's funny, people look back on it as a very creative time in rock music, but it was in Latin music as well. I was a huge fan of that – the ascendancy of the Fania label, and so on – and there was none of that in

London. And I've also always been a big jazz fan. In New York I was able to go and see someone like Sonny Rollins and Count Basie, in clubs in some cases."

SMOKIN' JOE...

For a time at the turn of the millennium, Joe Jackson confronted power on both sides of the Atlantic over the prohibition of smoking in public places. He even penned an essay on the subject, *Smoke, Lies And The Nanny State*, outlining the rationale behind his opposition, suggesting the ban was undemocratic, removed freedom of choice and disregarded property rights. The smoking lobby lost, of course, and Jackson has no intention of involving himself in trying to overturn the legislation.

"It's absolutely futile. I mean, I still feel the same way about it, that it's wrong on a lot of levels, mainly because it's based on lies – junk science.

"I didn't mean to become some kind of crusader about it. I was just trying to help out, that's all. I dropped out of it when I was starting to get requests for interviews as 'the smoking guy'. I want to be known as a musician!"

NEW YORK STORIES

The jazz scene would inspire Jackson's magnum opus, *Night And Day*, which spawned the hits *Steppin' Out* and *Breaking Us In Two*.

"I don't think it would have been possible to do that album in Britain. It was a very New York-influenced album. It's just that my vision of New York wasn't the same as the Ramones. It was very much the Latin world and the jazz world."

He admits to being nervous about how the album would be received, even though he had already signalled a style shift by channelling Louis Jordan and Cab Calloway on 1981's *Joe Jackson's Jumpin' Jive*.

"I thought, 'No one's going to like this.' I mean, it's very different to my first couple of albums. There's no guitar on it. It has Latin rhythms and a kind of jazzy influence. I was quite nervous. But I just felt, it's what I want to do, we'll put it out and whatever happens, happens. Completely fatalistic.



© John Huba

“There was a point in the 90s where I just felt like I didn’t fit in the pop world at all, I didn’t want to make pop music any more.”

JOE JACKSON

“I remember having an argument with David Kershenbaum, my producer at the time, because he was the one who thought *Steppin’ Out* was going to be a hit. And I said, ‘You’ve got to be joking – it’s not even going to get played on the radio!’”

If the fame was tiresome back in Blighty, it became “stupid at times” Stateside.

“When people are just purely interested in some kind of celebrity angle – you know, ‘I’ve got a bet with this mate of mine that you’re Joe Jackson. I say you’re not. There’s a tenner on it’... I mean, there were more stupid things than that, plenty of strange situations. But that’s died out somewhat now, because I’m not all over MTV like I was then.”

By the 90s, Jackson couldn’t have been further from MTV, as he dabbled in classical music on the likes of *Will Power*, *Night Music* and *Heaven & Hell*, before immersing himself fully on 1999’s *Symphony No. 1*, which earned him his sole Grammy Award for Best Pop Instrumental Album.

“There was a point in the 90s where I just felt like I didn’t fit in the pop world at all, I didn’t want to make pop music any more. I had a serious writer’s block in the early 90s.

“I got out of it by saying, ‘I don’t have to write lyrics if I don’t feel like it’, and started doing stuff that was more instrumentally-oriented, or not so pop song-oriented.

“The Grammy was gratifying because it impresses people. It means I can be referred to as a Grammy-winning artist. And some people think that’s a big deal. So that helps me. I’m quite aware that the Grammy was a bit of a fluke. I think it’s a weird category and no one knew what to vote for and they saw my name and maybe enough people thought I deserved a break or something. But I’ll take it.”

And well he should. For whatever way they come, Jackson certainly deserves the plaudits. He has always forged a singular path and, if *Fool* is a gauge, continues to do so. We should all help him celebrate his 40th. Like the man himself says, “Let’s have a party.” ■

● ***Fool* is out now and available on earMUSIC. Joe Jackson’s Four Decade Tour visits the UK in April.**

Joe Jackson rocking his current Roy-Batty-from-*Blade-Runner* look





DEVOTED FANS SHOW US
THEIR COLLECTIONS AND
POP MEMORABILIA

No.15

DURAN DURAN

VICKY PAPA,
MANTECA, CALIFORNIA,
UNITED STATES

Q When did you first become a Superfan of your favourite artist and why do you like them?

A I became interested in Duran Duran in about 1982 and have followed them ever since. I love the catchy songs, exotic videos and the band members themselves. I've always found Duran Duran have been able to keep up and still put out great music. Their concerts are always fun and they make me feel like I'm 12 years old again!

Q What do you have in your collection?

A I grew up wanting to create a museum of my collection and last year I was finally able to set it up after more than 30 years of collecting. I have over 1,200 LPs, 12" singles and 45s. I have every record player I've ever owned as well as cassettes and 8-tracks. In addition, I have all my concert tickets, T-shirts, programmes etc. I have a massive pop culture book collection and a stand displaying all my posters.

Q How much have you spent on your collection?

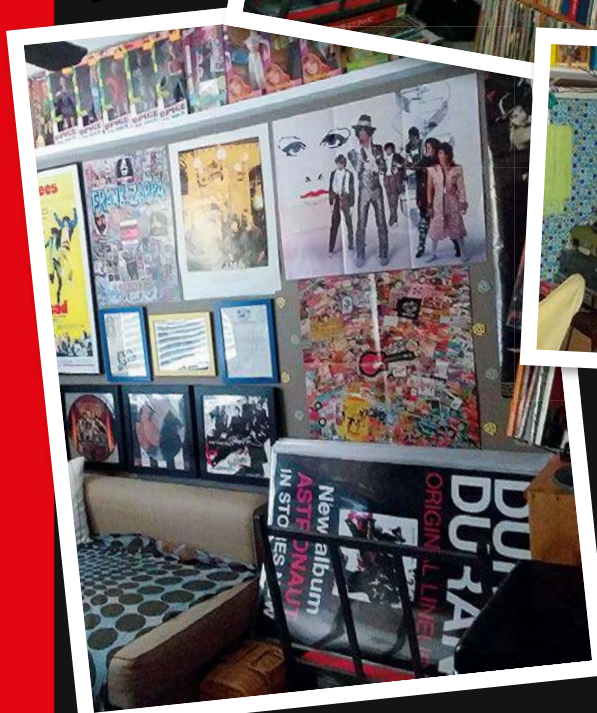
A Ha! I've spent thousands of dollars but it was all worth it. I collect mostly what I like, but occasionally buy things that I will possibly sell later. I even got my sister to invest in some items. It's mostly 60s, 70s and 80s stuff.

Q What's your favourite item in your collection?

A My most prized possession is Duran Duran's *Astronaut* LP. I actually have one sealed copy and the other is signed by all five original band members. Once I got that, I knew my collection was complete.

Q Have you ever met your favourite artist?

A I have been fortunate enough to have met all five original members of Duran Duran at a record signing. I met Simon Le Bon at a radio station as well. I've seen John Taylor twice, at his book signing and at Bloomingdale's for a Juicy Couture event. Roger Taylor was my favourite and I met him before a concert in New York City. Each time still makes me smile.



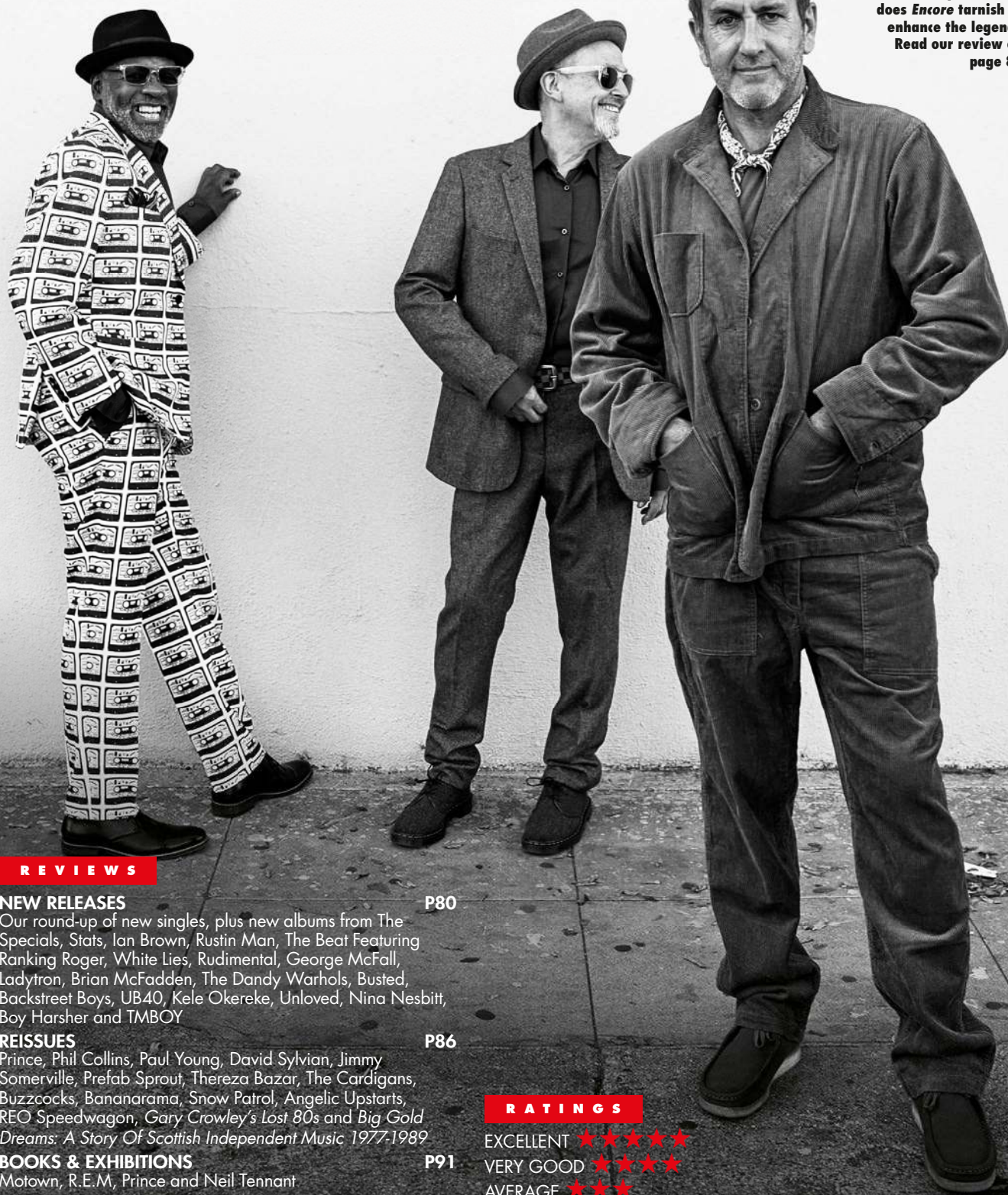
AND FINALLY...

Q If you could ask your favourite artist/ band one question, what would it be?

A I would like to know which songs have the most significance to the band personally.

REVIEWS

The Specials have released their first album with Terry Hall as singer since 1980's *More Specials*. But does *Encore* tarnish or enhance the legend? Read our review on page 81



REVIEWS

NEW RELEASES

Our round-up of new singles, plus new albums from The Specials, Stats, Ian Brown, Rustin Man, The Beat Featuring Ranking Roger, White Lies, Rudimental, George McFall, Ladytron, Brian McFadden, The Dandy Warhols, Busted, Backstreet Boys, UB40, Kele Okereke, Unloved, Nina Nesbitt, Boy Harsher and TMBOY

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REISSUES

Prince, Phil Collins, Paul Young, David Sylvian, Jimmy Somerville, Prefab Sprout, Thereza Bazar, The Cardigans, Buzzcocks, Bananarama, Snow Patrol, Angelic Upstarts, REO Speedwagon, Gary Crowley's *Lost 80s* and *Big Gold Dreams: A Story Of Scottish Independent Music 1977-1989*

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BOOKS & EXHIBITIONS

Motown, R.E.M., Prince and Neil Tennant

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LIVE & EVENTS

All Saints, The Cardigans, Adam Ant, Lily Allen, Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott

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RATINGS

EXCELLENT ★★★★★
 VERY GOOD ★★★★★
 AVERAGE ★★★
 PATCHY ★★
 POOR ★



MATTHEW RUDD

THE HOST OF FORGOTTEN 80s ON ABSOLUTE 80s RADIO CHECKS OUT NEW RELEASES, INCLUDING CHOICE CUTS FROM SAM SMITH, PAUL McCARTNEY AND CLAIRE RICHARDS – PLUS THE LATEST FROM LANA DEL REY...



SET IT OFF

MIDNIGHT THOUGHTS

Symphonic rhythm rock track with a fine, soaring vocal from Cody Carson. It has an excellent pop melody, but also a vigorous, aggressive lead guitar, a brief, stylish section of verse backed by just violin and handclaps and a really sudden ending. It's for everyone.



WHENYOUNG

GIVEN UP

Oppressively constant drumming with a Cranberries-esque vibe via ringing guitar, bittersweet melody and crystal vocals from Aoife Power make this a truly super single from the band's debut EP. This youthful Irish trio have already impressed Bono and Shane MacGowan.



DIDO

FRIENDS

Dido has a voice that both delights and outrages, and little will alter that on the back of this new single. However, its quite trippy, bright backing track replaces the previous 'you-have-been-put-on-hold' production that got her so much criticism before. Some may even now forgive her.



SAM SMITH

FIRE ON FIRE

This song from the new *Watership Down* is intended to be part-poignant, part-inspirational, but Sam Smith's colourless, jowly voice does what's already not a classic no favours whatsoever. The pauses between verse and chorus provide welcome silence on a difficult listen.



PAUL McCARTNEY

GET ENOUGH

The voice continues to waver and – shock horror! – he uses a vocoder, but it's strident enough before you even begin to consider making allowances for the icon on it. It eventually comes to the boil with a Wings-like instrumental jam and it's perfectly fine.



CLAIRE RICHARDS

SHAME ON YOU

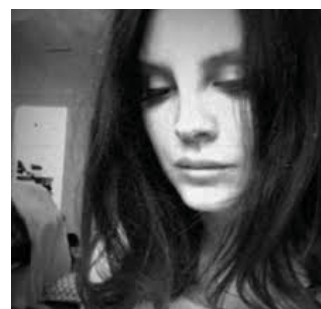
This is a top-notch effort. The indefatigable rhythm and bouncing piano track, beatless bridge and no-holds-barred chorus have been done many times before, but it's still executed really, really well. Great melody, relatable topic, cracking record.



SEA GIRLS

CALL ME OUT

An energetic single from a band touring the UK during the first three months of the year, nobly aiming to keep people singing and jumping in unison. It's got a great leading bass track and a banging chorus. Probably 30 seconds too long, that's all.



LANA DEL REY

HOPE IS A DANGEROUS THING FOR A WOMAN LIKE ME TO HAVE – BUT I HAVE IT

Savage, x-rated lyric; sinister, solemn delivery; bleak solo piano track and the echo function turned up to 10. It's a song about her struggle with depression and as thought-provoking as you'll hear all year.

FEBRUARY 2019
**CLASSIC
 POP**
 BEST NEW RELEASE



THE SPECIALS ENCORE

UNIVERSAL MUSIC CATALOGUE



WHILE IT'S CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION, THE SPECIALS' DAZZLING, PROVOCATIVE RETURN BRINGS WITH IT A SENSE OF SADNESS THAT THEY'RE STILL NEEDED SO BADLY

It's four decades since The Specials' definitive, eponymous debut, yet here they are, railing against many of the same issues – corruption, poverty, racism, sexism, violence, you name it – that first provoked them back in Coventry all those years ago. “The people,” they pointed out on 1981’s *Ghost Town*, “getting angry”, but the people have no less reason now. This comeback, therefore, could hardly be timelier. In fact, one might argue, it’s tragically overdue.

The Specials, of course, are no strangers to struggles. Jerry Dammers – whose efforts to lead the group in fresh directions on 1980’s *More*

Specials first caused them to splinter – is missing, having nearly scuppered proceedings when they reformed in 2008, later claiming he’d been elbowed out of the band. Today’s line-up is also short of Roddy “Radiation” Byers, who quit in 2014, and

Neville Staple, forced out by poor health in 2012. John Bradbury, meanwhile, sadly died in 2015, just as recordings began.

The stylistic drifts taken on *Encore* might suggest that their remaining members still pull in somewhat different directions. Opener *Black Skin Blue Eyed Boys* – one of a number of vibrant covers here, this one by The Equals, whom Terry Hall acknowledges as “the first British multiracial band” – draws greedily on disco, while *Vote For Me* has a delicious reggae lilt. A glorious, albeit gently mournful cover of Fun Boy Three’s striking *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)* adds deft

Latin touches, *Breaking Point* playfully mixes jazz and ska, and *The Life And Times (Of A Man Called Depression)* finds Hall in declamatory mode as he addresses his bipolarity.

They display, nonetheless, a genuine unity, encapsulated in their parting shot, the nobly titled *We Sell Hope*. Hall may sound as despondent as ever, but his conclusion – “Looked all around the world/ Could be a beautiful place to live in” – is as uplifting as his backing. Furthermore, the presence of Saffiyah Khan, famously photographed facing down an EDL march in 2017, underlines their ambitions for equality on a defiant pastiche of Prince Buster’s *Ten Commandments*: “I shall be seen/ And I will be heard”.

But if Lynval Golding’s *B.L.M.* provides a revelatory, uncompromising exposé of the Windrush generation’s suffering, and *Blam Blam Fever* unsparingly derides American gun culture, Hall’s still earned the last words on an album that might be better titled *Very Specials*: “We’ve got to take care of each other”.
Wyndham Wallace



STATS OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

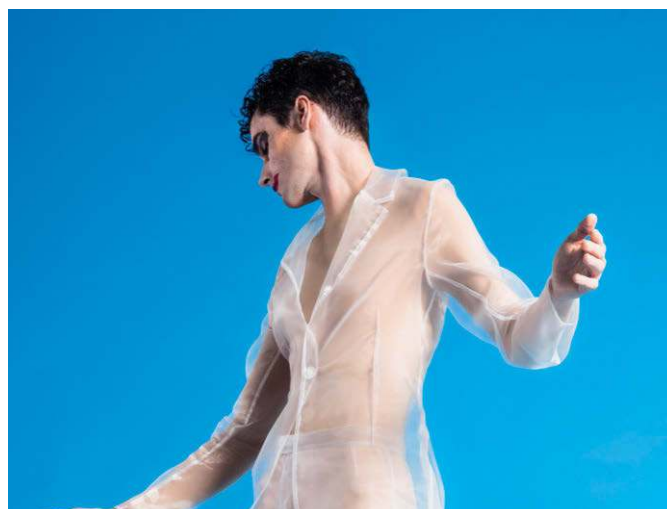
★★★★★



"I am an animal," Ed Seed declares at the outset of this London six-piece's debut, but that can't be true. Stats are too disciplined to be animalistic, though they'd definitely make good pets: fun, energetic, but mischievous. That, perhaps, is why Elton John – who last spring dedicated a performance of *Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me* to his faithful but recently deceased hound – is a fan. Seed, however, has moved in heady

circles for a while, having played in both La Roux's and Dua Lipa's bands, and one suspects his own project has set its sights higher than a daily stroll with 'Captain Fantastic'. One might even say, were one to stretch the metaphor, that this dog wants its own day.

Stats might just get that, though admittedly they're hardly unique. *Other People's Lives* could sometimes be mistaken for LCD Soundsystem, most obviously on its title track, where elegant piano chords greet a sturdy bassline, the song's bridge soon flaunting one of those stoned chants James Murphy adores. *Lose It*, too, sounds like the DFA mastermind remixing an ecstatic Pet Shop Boys anthem, Seed distracting us with arch, Neil Tennant-like reflections: "I left the back door unlocked/ For four straight days and nights/



But nothing was taken/ I tell you/ You can't rely on anyone anymore".

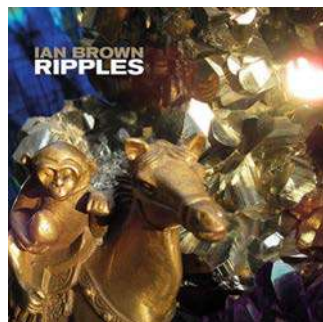
Nonetheless, Stats adroitly adapts – rather than adopts – LCD's characteristics, mining down to their original influences. You can hear Murphy in the tinny production of *Raff's* vocals, but the song also starts like Eurythmics' *Love Is A Stranger* before swerving towards Talking Heads, while the stop-start *There Is A Story I Tell About*

My Life might be Datarock covering Depeche Mode. Stats are haunted, too, by David Bowie, whose *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* guitar solos and dreamy *Heroes* melancholy are effectively paired with the persistent simplicity of U2's *With Or Without You* on the wonderful *Never Loved Anyone*. Even that opener, *I Am An Animal*, can't hide its fondness for *Fame*. You can, it seems, teach a new dog old tricks. **WW**

IAN BROWN RIPPLES

VIRGIN/EMI

★★★★★



The accepted wisdom surrounding The Stone Roses is that the reunion eventually foundered because Reni didn't want to make new music enough. Though it's galling one of our finest drummers apparently can't be arsed, it potentially left John Squire and Mani free to help out on the first album by Ian Brown, or any Stone Rose, since *My Way* a decade ago.

Instead, *Ripples'* only guests are Brown's sons, who co-write three tracks. Two others, *Black*

Roses and *Break Down The Walls*, are covers of Barrington Levy and Mikey Dread songs.

The title track and *The Dreamer And The Dream* are excellent, Brown's hushed voice at its most charismatic over loping funk in a *My Star* mould. Where *Ripples* fails is in basic sketches like *It's Raining Diamonds* and *Soul Satisfaction*. For a man who hasn't released an album in 10 years, they sound rushed.

You can understand Brown's reluctance to trust outsiders. Like his former bandmates, Brown hasn't been interviewed since the Roses' comeback press conference in 2012, so one can only guess how their second break-up has bruised him. But, musically, the prosaic backing of the promising *Breathe And Breathe Easy* is crying out for an outside producer. Perhaps *Ripples* is a palette cleanser to let Brown decide what he really wants to do next. **John Earls**

RUSTIN MAN DRIFT CODE

DOMINO RECORDS

★★★★★



Aside from rare spells as a producer, Paul Webb aka Rustin Man hasn't disturbed us for 16 years. The former Talk Talk bassist's not been quiet, though: he's been raising a family in a converted Essex countryside barn decorated to resemble an eccentric antique store. Sepia-tinted glimpses of that home can be seen in *Drift Code's* artwork, and they match this often pastoral, idiosyncratic return's atmosphere perfectly, with its cryptic nostalgia sometimes hinting at a peculiarly Arcadian

folk, not least on mournful torch song *Bring Me Joy*.

Those seduced by Beth Gibbons' presence on 2002's *Out Of Season*, however, will face a significant hurdle. Webb's own voice now leads, and it's an acquired taste: on reverential opener *Vanishing Heart*, his trembling, hesitant tone – imagine Robert Wyatt mimicking Mark Hollis – shocks amid a fragile accompaniment, which distantly echoes Talk Talk's late-career arrangements. The timeless, giddy *The World's In Town* also echoes Wyatt's songwriting for *Schleep*, but there's a deftness to *Our Tomorrows*, whose rhythms – courtesy of former TT colleague Lee Harris – evoke Nick Drake. A spookily carnivalesque *Light The Light* meanwhile underlines his experimental urges, and *Martian Garden* his fondness for an unexpected crescendo. *Drift Code's* a curio worthy of the wait. **WW**

THE BEAT FEATURING RANKING ROGER PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

DMF RECORDS

★★★★★

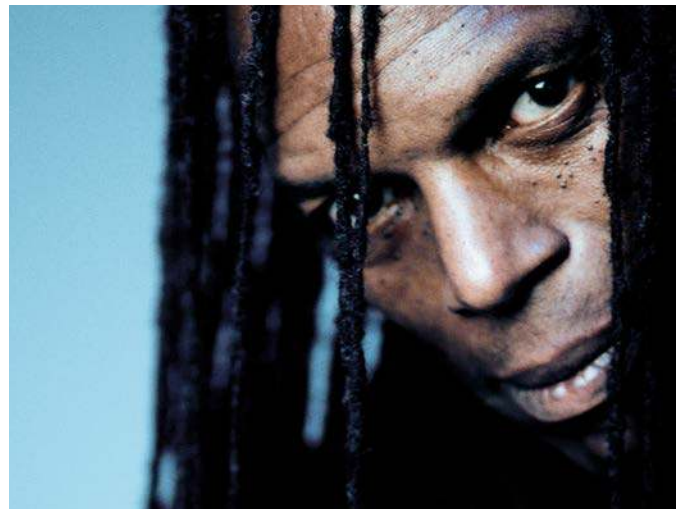


Despite a burst of energy that's brought two long-players in three years, Ranking Roger won't be touring the follow-up to 2016's *Bounce*, his first album with The Beat in three decades. Having been diagnosed with cancer, he's undergoing treatment, at the time of writing, in his hometown of Birmingham.

This is especially sad because he's rarely sounded in ruder health: *Public Confidential* is a

vigorous, upbeat collection that barely pauses for breath right from *Maniac*'s opening chord, one which immediately brings to mind the veteran 2 Tone band's classic *Mirror In The Bathroom*. A state-of-the-nation diatribe, it takes no prisoners, Chiko Hamilton's squawks of saxophone as righteously tireless as lyrics about ideological divides: "Don't believe what I read/ 'Cos it ain't black or white".

News of Roger's health is also depressing because voices like his are vital if the UK's to survive as a tolerant, democratic nation. Like The Specials, who still find cause for fury at the sluggish nature of British social progress, Roger's never been afraid of calling things as he sees them. On *Who's Dat Looking*, he addresses police surveillance, something particularly familiar



to the country's non-Caucasian members. The song's not, admittedly, a million musical miles from *Maniac*, but its punishing rush towards its climax is no less thrilling, and if the title track appears cheerful, it's only because impending reality's sharp edges – "High on critical/ The street don't lie" – are softened by its sense of community.

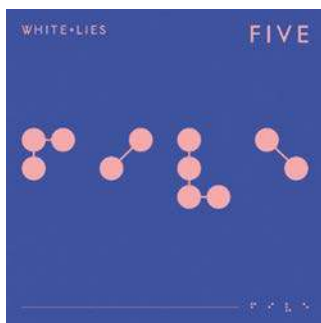
There are more private details amid *Long Call Short Talk*'s rattling ska, in which Roger

confronts a stalker – "You're kinda over excess/ That's why you have me on your GPS" – but somehow the comforting presence of his family tempers many fears. Daughter Saffren provides backing vocals throughout, while his son, Ranking Junior, pops up for toasts, notably on the ebullient *Giving It Up*. There's optimism, too, on the jolly *A Good Day For Sunshine*, so there's hope for us all – including Roger – yet. **WW**

WHITE LIES FIVE

[PIAS]

★★★★★



Though this London three-piece are now on their third label in 10 years, their fifth album suggests they've finally settled down, if only musically. The title may suggest a sense of self-importance, but they still sound less self-consciously sincere than Interpol, with whom they're often compared, and they continue to share similar influences, many taken from that rich period when post-punk and pop collided. It is, for instance, impossible to listen to *Never Alone* without hearing

Simple Minds in its bombastic urgency and Joy Division in its twinkling keyboards and bassline, the latter's influence further underlined by the brazen use of a sped-up rhythm borrowed from the Mancunians' *Atmosphere*.

Nonetheless, though they're often glum, there's something escapist about this widescreen misery, as though the Goths have made a pact with the New Romantics. *Kick Me* at first appears gloomily self-piteous, but there's something about Harry McVeigh's chants of "I won't be alone" that recalls Simon Le Bon's more impassioned wails. *Denial*, meanwhile, swaps its verses' chugging, *Every Breath You Take* guitars for a chorus of big budget power chords and shiny synths, while *Finish Line* swoons with Echo And The Bunnymen's drama, McVeigh sounding uncannily like Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos. **WW**

RUDIMENTAL TOAST TO OUR DIFFERENCES

MAJOR TOMS/ASYLUM RECORDS

★★★★★



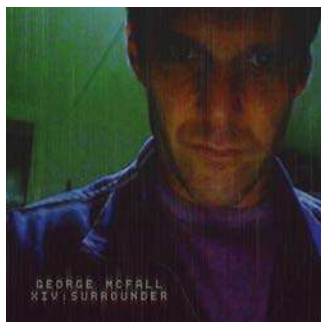
There may be no better way to illustrate how we've aged than to peruse Rudimental's third album's credits. No-one's doubting the legitimacy of the rollcall of guest collaborators across its Deluxe Edition's 16 tracks, but to recognise them all you'd need to be the kind of person who knows every character in *Skam*. Instead, as a *Classic Pop* reader, you may find yourself stumped after Ladysmith Black Mambazo, who you'll recall for their contribution to Paul Simon's

Grammy Award-winning *Graceland*, and that, of course, was in 1986. So yeah: feeling old yet? Or is your phone full of Kabaka Pyramid and Hak Baker mp3s?

Inevitably, you won't be buying this record for Ladysmith Black Mambazo, whose contribution – a 48-second cappella, *Thula Ungakhlay* – is then recycled, in inconspicuous fashion, for *These Days*, with top billing instead going to the ubiquitous Jess Glynne, Macklemore and Dan Caplen. This is a questionable way to honour one of the African continent's most influential musical entities, but the billing's a surefire way to sell records, as is decorating *Summer Love*'s drum'n'bass with Rita Ora, and letting *X Factor* winner James Arthur warble over *Sun Comes Up*'s tropicalia. Now That's What I Call Music 2019. **WW**

GEORGE McFALL XIV: SURROUNDER

TENEMENT RECORDS



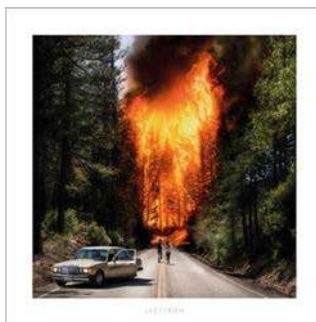
Unless, perhaps, you met him growing up, you won't know George McFall. That's because his only other album, *God Save The Clean*, was released under the Mafia-like pseudonym Clean George IV, and, since it arrived back in 2011, you'd be forgiven for having forgotten it anyway. He's clearly not a quick worker: the XIV in this second album's title signifies the year it was first due, before life apparently got in the way. To be fair, however, it takes time

and energy to make a record with quite this much detail.

All the same, he doesn't hang around here: in and out in 36 minutes, McFall frequently moves at breakneck speed. Were it not dominated by swooping synths, *Change* might double for thrash metal, while *Repetition* has the furious forward momentum of a rockabilly tune. *Surrounder*, meanwhile, sounds like Gary Numan at his most ferocious, though McFall's less robotic, ranting rather more like Mark E. Smith, albeit in a surprisingly sober fashion. *Nargo's* less hectic, but its wayward keyboard melodies are nonetheless bewildering, and *Autumn's* also more measured, though it builds and builds like M83's epic, earlier material, a trick the climactic *Norman* also repeats. Remember this name. George McFall, obviously, not Norman. **WW**

LADYTRON LADYTRON

LADYTRON MUSIC



Nigh on three years since they announced they'd ended their – by that stage – five-year hiatus, Ladytron finally return with their sixth studio album. Since they've already survived an unhappy early association with electroclash, perhaps an eight-year gap will be an easy hurdle. To make sure, however, they've made few changes to their retro-futuristic style. It's not even impossible they've been in suspended animation. That's certainly what the video for the

Goldfrapp-esque *The Island* seems to suggest, both in its opening scene and overt *Stranger Things* references.

Unfortunately, however, Ladytron don't seem to have used the time to polish their lyrical skills. *Until The Fire* offers little but a repeated, enigmatic phrase – “We hang on the wire, and the walls get higher” – while *Horrorscope* is no more insightful, its opening line, “Ballerina palm reader sitting on the stairs”, delivered with the passion of Client reciting *Little Miss Muffet*. If you're here for tunes, *The Animals'* cascading synths will help, as will the sultry *The Mountain*, and *Deadzone's* screeching, stabbing synths will satisfy drama fans. Nonetheless, though their final tune moodily insists that *Tomorrow Is Another Day*, the future doesn't seem to change much at all. **WW**



BRIAN McFADDEN OTIS

BOHO RECORDS



The first in his planned series of soul-themed covers albums, *Otis* finds the former Westlife member tackling some of the King Of Soul's finest tunes. Obviously, it's hard to fault songs like Redding's aching *Loving You Too Long* and Sam Cooke's optimistic *A Change Is Gonna Come*, while McFadden's husky voice lends a certain authenticity, as does the presence of Mica Paris on a slightly overblown *Angel*. But *Shake's* guest star Andrew Strong underlines how this is much like The Commitments' cabaret: reverent, capable, but unable to match the originals. **WW**



THE DANDY WARHOLS WHY YOU SO CRAZY

DINE ALONE RECORDS



A quarter century into their career, The Dandy Warhols deliver a whacked-out 10th album that makes few concessions to commerce. Instead they offer lo-fi ELO (*Be Alright*) and lo-fi Prince (*Thee Elegant Bum*), psychedelic Beck (*Motor City Steel*) and psychotic Soft Cell (*Terraform*), while *Forever* could even be one-time admirer, David Bowie, although most likely he'd have kept the tune to himself. That this begins with the 40-second, cartoon-esque *Fred N Ginger* and ends with a six-minute-long solo piano extravaganza, *Ondine*, pretty much sums up their craziness. **WW**



BUSTED HALF WAY THERE

EAST WEST



Busted's James Bourne says this fourth album will make fans feel “I got my band back,” and, after *Night Driver's* 80s flavours, he's right. Still, MIA's guitar riffs can't mask its poppy chorus, and *What Happened To Your Band* pays tribute to the decade's hair metal, though it's definitely less groomed. Don't be fooled by opener *Nineties'* gentle boy band opening, either: producer Gil Norton ensures that references to Smashing Pumpkins and “Nirvana-na-na” match its efforts to revive grunge, while *Shipwrecked In Atlantis* suggests fans have got Green Day back as well. **WW**



BACKSTREET BOYS DNA

RCA RECORDS



Poor Backstreet Boys. They've been to Paris, they tell us on *No Place*, and to Rome, and even “seen the sun setting on the beach in Mexico”. They're suffering terribly, though, because “there ain't no way to touch your body over the phone”. Their imagination's in similarly short supply throughout their 10th album (their first since *In A World Like This*, six years ago), but perhaps that's for the best. After learning on *Standard* that “There's a space in my bed/ In the shape of your head”, no-one wants to wonder where they'd stash the rest of their beloved's body. **WW**

UB40 FOR THE MANY

SHOESTRING MUSIC PRODUCTIONS



UB40 FOR THE MANY



While contemporaries The Specials and The Beat this month let off steam about the currently shabby state of world affairs, UB40 kick off their 19th album – also their first of original material with former singer Ali Campbell's brother, Duncan – in sentimental fashion. Their solution to grim times, it seems, is old-school romance: "She makes a bright and sunny day," sings another of Duncan's brothers, Robin, on *The Keeper*, "from

dark and fear-filled night." Don't worry, though: they're not neglecting their traditional responsibilities. The band's always mixed pop and politics, and it doesn't take them long to shine a light on the country's divides. The lilting *I'm Alright* Jack finds Pablo Rider reinforcing Duncan's mockery of Britain's ruling classes – "It must be nice to be able to call a cab when you want" – and the rest of the album's similarly styled, with *Poor Fool*'s leisurely reggae addressing the wealth divide and *All We Do Is Cry*'s heavy dub combining social commentary and positivity. Gilly G also joins Norman Hassan for *Moonlight Lover*'s trumpet-fuelled flirting, while, amid echoing dancehall rhythms, Earl Falconer asks the question on everyone's lips: *What Happened To UB40?* Let's not risk further spoilers. You'll just have to listen. **WW**

KELE OKEREKE LEAVE TO REMAIN

THE ORCHARD



If Bloc Party frontman Kele Okereke's latest solo album feels conceptual, that's because its songs were written with one-time *Doctor Who* scriptwriter Matt Jones to accompany a new play at the Lyric Hammersmith. This helps explain the occasional bursts of spoken word interrupting, for example, *No Blue Skies* or *Chi Chi Convinces*, as well as how these songs – and many others here – depend more upon unresolved drama than

immediate melodies. Jones' presence may have further helped with the album's sometimes striking sleights of verbal hand, including *No Blue Skies*' insight that "sticks and stones can not only break bones/ They can undo homes", and *Not The Drugs Talking*'s blunt insistence that "it's not some powdered high.../ What I'm rushing off is you".

Still, despite its theatrical premise, *Leave To Remain* – at least in part – can still thrive independently. Indeed, its closest relative is probably David Bowie's *The Buddha Of Suburbia* soundtrack. So, thanks to their intelligent fusion of West African hi-life and contemporary club music, *Shame's* pained wails, *More Than You Know's* subdued electronica and the plaintive *The Fight* all warrant particular attention. It's worth sticking around. **WW**



UNLOVED HEARTBREAK

HEAVENLY RECORDINGS



With their profile boosted by appearances on *Killing Eve's* soundtrack, perhaps *Unloved's* experiments in 60s girl group obsession will gain wider acceptance. Tracks like *(SIGH)*, a mash-up of Jade Vincent's drowsy vocals and sinister strings, might not help, but they make no bones about whom they aspire to on *Lee*, a blatant pastiche of Lee Hazlewood's Nancy Sinatra productions. Consequently, this aural feast is sometimes reminiscent of the overlooked *Adventures In Stereo*, and at its best on *Crash Boom Bang*, which reflects member David Holmes' Hollywood work. **WW**



NINA NESBITT THE SUN WILL COME UP, THE SEASONS WILL CHANGE

COOKING VINYL



"You've got me thinking," Scotland's Nina Nesbitt sings on *Somebody Special*, "I've got potential/ To be somebody special". It's true: the song's hook sinks in deep, but like much of this second album, it lacks distinctive qualities. True, she communicates despair on *Is It Really Me You're Missing?*, while her team of producers ensure *Empire's* chorus is suitably substantial. But the latter's boast that "I started racking up numbers online" feels inelegant, and one's left with a sense of potential unfulfilled. **WW**



BOY HARSHER CAREFUL

NUDE CLUB



While this Georgia duo's second release sometimes displays the glinting production of last year's superb *Emika* album – Jae Matthews' voice definitely boasts the Berliner's numbed indifference, especially when swathed in *Face The Fire's* minimalist, synthetic textures – it's often far darker. *Keep Driving's* menacing drones set the scene, for example, and its brief, closing title track is worthy of a sci-fi horror. Lighter moments exist, however. *LA* opens like New Order and proceeds like a slinky Pet Shop Boys, while *Tears* puts the sex into early OMD. Be careful indeed. **WW**



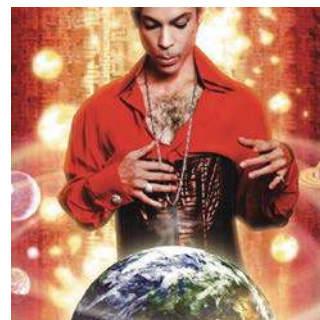
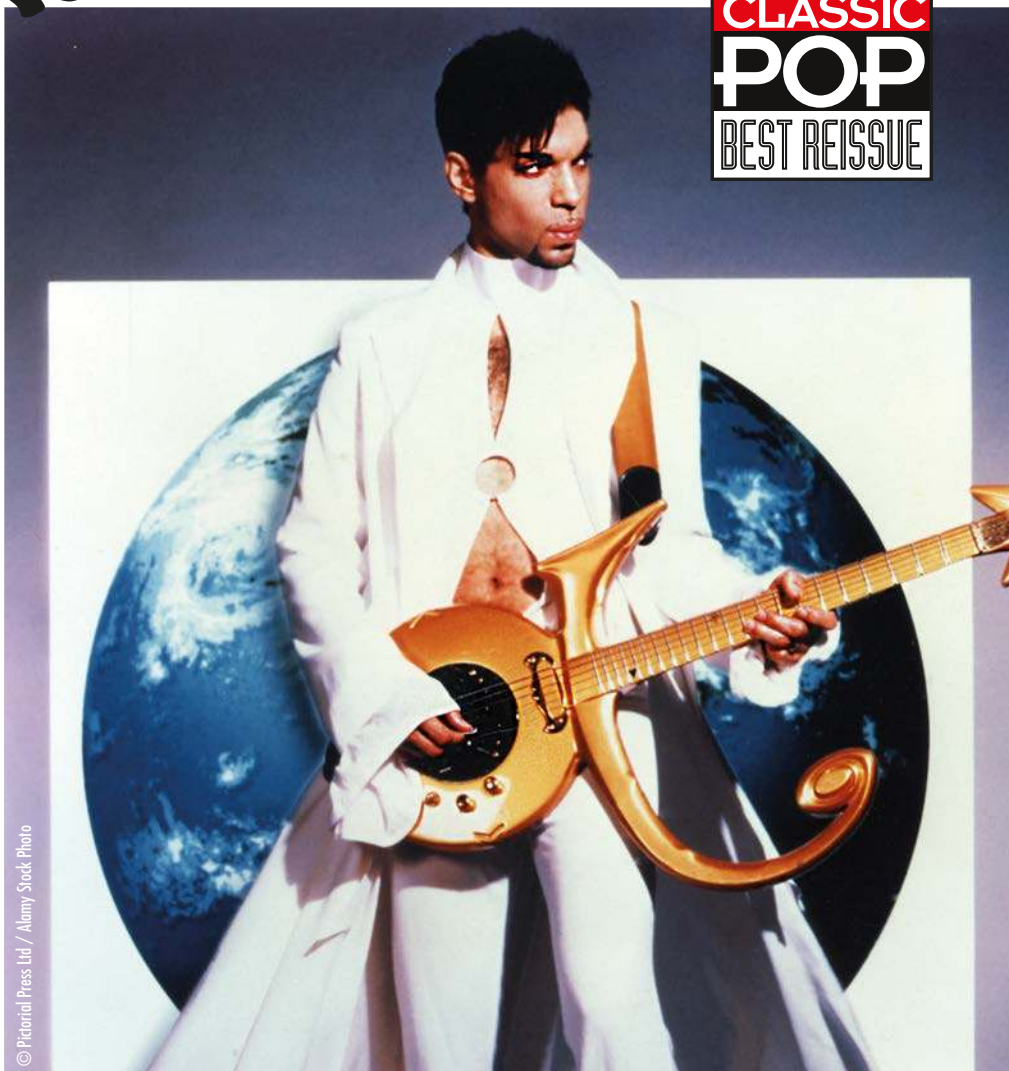
TMBOY STEAM

SELF-RELEASED VIA BANDCAMP



Are you yearning for the days when Björk sang indelible melodies like an unpredictable child? Sarah Aument's queer themes may be more militant, but she exhibits some of that excitable intonation while Will Shore's club-friendly production wouldn't embarrass Nellee Hooper. Listen to the depth of his bass on *Seed*, and the shuddering throbs of percussion underpinning *Held Under's* soaring chorus. Recent single *Zephyr*, its slow-burning melody buffeted by shimmering electronics, and *Submarine's* pulsing poignancy meanwhile offer further standouts. **WW**

FEBRUARY 2019
**CLASSIC
POP**
BEST REISSUE



Beautiful Girl In The World, a full decade earlier.

Prince hadn't totally eschewed his download-only inconsequential doodling, as 2004's *The Chocolate Invasion* and *The Slaughterhouse* proved, but by 2006 his gimlet gaze was once again fastened firmly on the mainstream. *3121* was a sharp, lewd and luscious beast, shimmering with vibrant brio from the transgressional sex-funk of *Lolita* to the Neptunes-hued futurism of *Black Sweat* and the sensual boudoir ballad *Incense And Candles*. The underrated *Fury* nodded to both Hendrix and James Brown, and *3121* completed Prince's commercial rehabilitation: it was a US No.1.

The miracle of Prince's genius was always how prolific it was. Back on top of the world, he celebrated with 2007's *Planet Earth*, a fun and tightly-wound set that encompassed the tongue-in-cheek freak-out of *Guitar*, the slick-talking cosmic seduction of *The One U Wanna C* and the jazzy, endearingly berserk *Chelsea Rodgers*. With characteristic contrariness, he then gave the album away for free in the UK with the *Mail On Sunday* and promoted it via 21 dates at the O2.

There are no bonus tracks here, just the welcome sound of a previously-coasting musical genius snapping back into world-beating mode – but you can get coloured vinyl. Purple only, of course. **Ian Gittins**

PRINCE MUSICOLOGY/3121/ PLANET EARTH

SONY MUSIC



MANY THOUGHT PRINCE HAD LOST HIS MAGIC TOUCH IN THE EARLY 2000s. BUT A REBIRTH WAS JUST AROUND THE CORNER...

By 2004, Prince looked to be a spent force. He had largely frittered away the near-decade since his escape from Warner Bros on wilfully self-indulgent, whimsical releases. His last record, the previous year's *N.E.W.S.*, had comprised four 14-minute instrumental tracks, and was his third album in a row not to chart.

Self-chosen or not, he was always going to tire of such obscurity, and just as expectations were at rock-bottom he decided to mount a

full-on commercial comeback. These three 2004-07 albums reignited his dormant career: reissued on CD, they are also now released for the first time on vinyl.

His fresh intent and focus was clear from the first yowl of the opening track to *MusicoLOGY*. Where recent albums had yawned and sprawled, now the funk was once again taut, resolute, and making promises its beats could keep: "We got a PhD in advanced body-moving!" It was

no *Sign O' The Times*-style stone-cold classic, but he was palpably back in the game: the sly, knowing *Cinnamon Girl* was his lushest slice of psychedelic sex-pop since *The Most*





© Ian Dickson/Redferns

PHIL COLLINS SERIOUS HITS... LIVE!/ A HOT NIGHT IN PARIS

RHINO

★★★

At the height of his world-domination period, the musical Marmite that is Phil Collins shifted so many units that even his live albums sold by the zillion. Yet these two reissues (on both CD and vinyl) date from nearly a decade apart and are very different beasts.

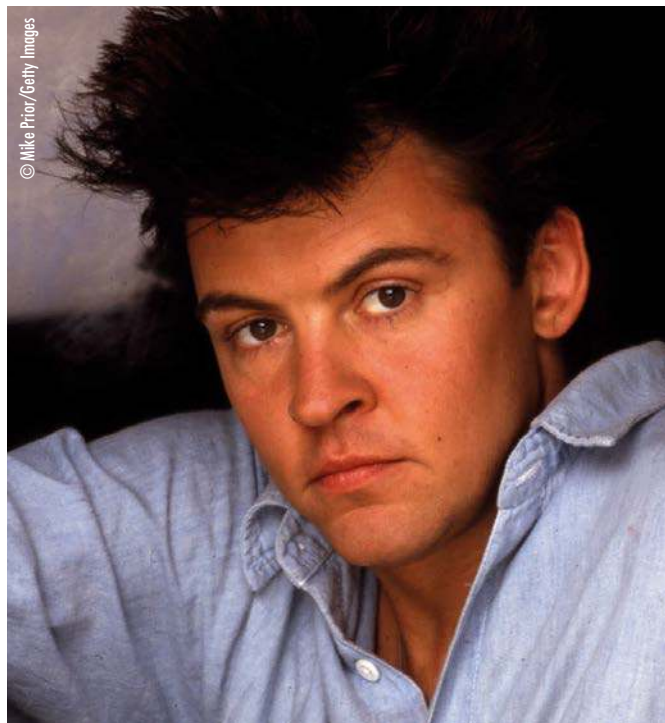
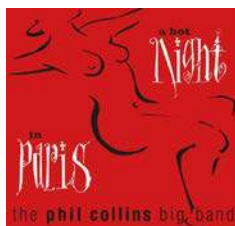
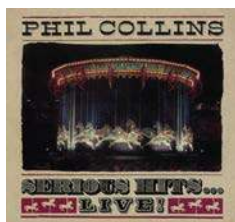
Originally released in 1990, *Serious Hits... Live!* captured Collins on the road for his seven-month world tour to promote 1989's *...But Seriously* behemoth. His label, Virgin, had at that point inexplicably failed to put out a greatest hits studio album: filling the gap, this live set was to sell more than four million copies.

To some ears, Collins' soul will always sound ersatz, a try-hard and superficial facsimile of Motown heartbreak, but it is impossible to deny that *Serious Hits... Live!* is a slick and glossy affair. Although its tracks are cherry-picked from various

stadia and arenas around the globe, you can never see the joins, and Collins' proficient band fire through *Against All Odds*, *Another Day In Paradise* and *In The Air Tonight* with forensic precision.

Eight years on, Collins retreated back behind the drums and took off on tour with the Phil Collins Big Band. Recorded in July 1998 and originally released in 1999, *A Hot Night In Paris* found them parping through instrumental versions of his hits as well as covers of Genesis, the Average White Band and (ambitiously) Miles Davis. Neither pop nor jazz, it was one of those records that are more fun to make than to listen to.

If you feel your record collection is lacking in dated, easy-listening live albums, then dive right in... but it is unlikely that even the most diehard Phil Collins completist will regard these releases as essential. **IG**



© Mike Prior/Getty Images

PAUL YOUNG THE CBS SINGLES COLLECTION 1982-1994

EDSEL

★★★★★

David Cassidy. David Essex. George Michael. Marti Pellow. Justin Timberlake. Justin Bieber. The curse of being beautiful (we should be so lucky!) has over the years afflicted so many male pop stars who have damned their good looks for detracting from their credibility as artists.

In the 80s there was no more extreme case than Paul Young. Possessed of a fine, yearning quaver, and a skilled purveyor of blue-eyed soul, he was doomed to be routinely dismissed as mere *Smash Hits*-friendly teen-scream fodder.

Unlike many others, Young bore this fate fairly stoically, and yet the evidence suggests that he may have been critically short-changed – not least on this ridiculously exhaustive 20CD set of his major-label singles for CBS, packed with remixes, demos and live tracks.

The collection is certainly a labour of love, although it is not easy to work out who, exactly, needs six versions of *Come Back And Stay*. It's also a reminder that Young was

largely an interpreter of other people's songs: all his biggest hits were cover versions.

Yet, at times, what a classy interpreter he was. His 80s chart smashes stand up well, 30 years on. The catch in his voice during *Love Of The Common People*; the gentle menace he added to Ann Peebles' *I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down*; the soul he invested in Daryl Hall's *Every Time You Go Away*. His love for the material was palpable.

The hits and the songs fell away in the later years, when he found himself resorting to duets with Zucchero, Clannad and Paul Carrack, and 1993's *Now I Know What Made Otis Blue* was his last major-label high point. Yet Paul Young was

always more, so much more, than a pretty face. **IG**





© Everett Collection Inc / Alamy Stock Photo

DAVID SYLVIAN VINYL REISSUES

UMC/VIRGIN EMI



For somebody so beautiful, David Sylvian was always a most unlikely pop star. His career appears to be a process of attempting to shed himself of all show, glitter, personality: essentially, of trying to lose all of the defining qualities of a pop star.

For most casual listeners, Japan were a masterclass in still, beatific, reflective electro-pop: for Sylvian they were too noisy, too cluttered. These vinyl reissues of his first four solo albums capture his early bid to strip away all artifice in pursuit of a serene music that hovered on the cusp of silence.

It was a slow and gradual journey. His first offering, 1984's *Brilliant Trees*, conceived with Ryuichi Sakamoto, Holger Czukay of Can and trumpeter Jon Hassell, still flirted with pop. *Pulling Punches* unfurled around a rich, phat bassline: he even scored minor hits with the murmured *The Ink In The Well* and *Red Guitar*.

Such transitory delights

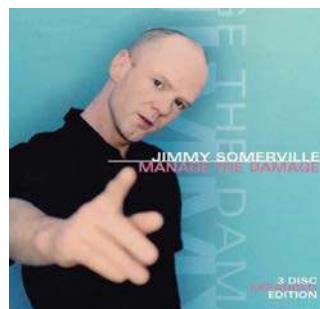
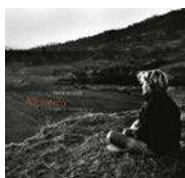
were gone by the following year's *Alchemy – An Index Of Possibilities*. Sylvian now regards this as an 'intermediary' release rather than an album proper as it

fused two entirely separate projects, yet the same musicians, plus Robert Fripp and Japan's Steve Jansen, wove wonders. The same was true of 1986's double-album, *Gone To Earth*, with the nine-minute mood piece *Before The Bullfight* being a gorgeous standout.

Yet the best of these reissues is 1987's *Secrets Of The Beehive*. The hushed *The Boy With The Gun* was as slight as a distant breeze and yet somehow immaculate and imposing; *Orpheus* housed a rare, spectral beauty; *When Poets Dreamed Of Angels* merited its title.

These four early albums are all

staging-posts on David Sylvian's ever more refined, rarefied musical journey, fuelled by his intuited truth: he had to absent himself from pop to find his strongest, purest voice. **IG**

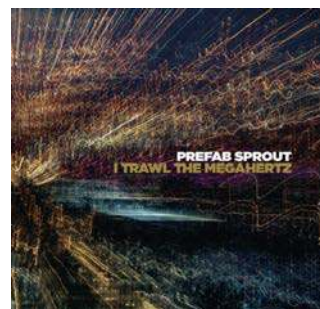


JIMMY SOMERVILLE MANAGE THE DAMAGE

CHERRY RED



Jimmy Somerville's third solo album, released in 1999, was recorded in his home studio in the early days of Pro Tools with then-flatmate and former Communards bandmate Sally Herbert. It was a mellow, low-key affair with introspective tracks such as *Here I Am* and *Dark Sky* seemingly intended to soundtrack long, dark nights of the soul. This 43-track 3CD reissue offers a load of remixes and club mixes, and Somerville's romp through the Bronski Beat-like *Something To Live For* with the Melbourne Gay & Lesbian Chorus is a proper banger. **IG**

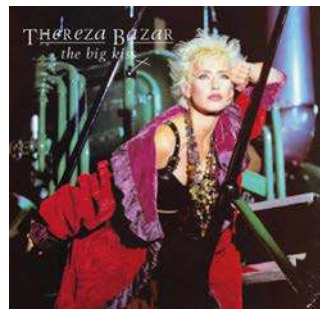


PREFAB SPROUT I TRAWL THE MEGAHERTZ

SONY MUSIC



First released as a Paddy McAloon solo album in 2003, *I Trawl The Megahertz* now reappears under the Prefab Sprout name. Recorded as a reclusive McAloon immersed himself in late-night short-wave radio while recovering from a sight-threatening illness, it's a tender, halting, mostly instrumental concept piece. The key is the lovely 22-minute title track on which a woman reviews her post-divorce life dissolving into dust, like a stricken, electro-ambient Sylvia Plath. McAloon sings on only one track but his spirit infuses every beat. **IG**



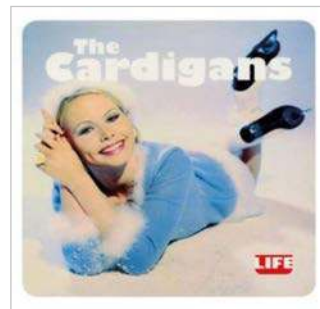
THEREZA BAZAR THE BIG KISS

CHERRY POP



After the demise of Dollar, Thereza Bazar recorded her only solo album in 1985's *The Big Kiss*, which for no obvious reason is now being reissued as a 2CD set 34 years on. The record died the death then largely because, shorn of Trevor Horn's production smarts, Bazar's songs were revealed as generic pop-disco schmaltz and her shrill, helium vocal was also found wanting.

Bazar recently told *Classic Pop* she was unable to listen to *The Big Kiss* album for 10 years after it flopped. You are strongly advised to pursue a similar policy. **IG**



THE CARDIGANS VINYL REISSUES

UMC/POLYDOR



Possessed of solid songwriting chops and sugar-sweet choruses, The Cardigans – aka the indie ABBA – were always the Radio 2 band it was cool for the hip kids to like. Their six studio albums to date are now reissued on 180g black vinyl and show their muse was never prone to creative quantum leaps: from 1994's *Emmerdale* via 1998 UK No.1 *Gran Turismo* to 2005's *Super Extra Gravity* they simply spied out pert, pretty pop nuggets with Nordic efficiency. Yet they also had depth, and 2003's melancholic *Long Gone Before Daylight* is extremely highly recommended. **IG**



BUZZCOCKS

ANOTHER MUSIC IN A DIFFERENT KITCHEN/LOVE BITES

DOMINO



THE FIRST TWO ALBUMS FROM PUNK'S PREMIER MELODY-MAKERS GET A TIMELY REISSUE, WEEKS AFTER PETE SHELLEY'S TRAGIC DEATH

Buzzcocks' 1977 *Spiral Scratch* EP is often regarded as the sonic cornerstone of punk rock, yet they were always so much more than *just* punk. Where the Sex Pistols and The Clash were predicated on societal anger, they were fragile and tender; if the London punks were avowedly political, Buzzcocks' scratchy angst was *personal*.

They were also a wondrous singles band: in their first year of life alone, they effortlessly knocked out *Orgasm Addict*, *What Do I Get?* and *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've?)*. Yet this

vinyl-only reissue of their first two albums, scheduled before the sad death of Pete Shelley from a suspected heart attack in December, serves as a timely testament to their pop brilliance.

Shelley and his fellow, soon-to-depart co-founder Howard Devoto

formed Buzzcocks inspired by the inchoate rage of the Pistols, but March 1978 debut *Another Music In A Different Kitchen* was equally in thrall to the electronic minimalism of Kraftwerk and Can on tracks

like the hypnotically repetitive *Moving Away From The Pulsebeat*. Bleak, sardonic humour also reigned: *Sixteen* found Shelley drawling, "I don't like French kissing/ 'Cause you swallow my tongue" over a chainsaw riff. *I Don't Mind*, meanwhile, buried lyrics about a crippling identity crisis under natively serrated, pogo-friendly guitar thrusts.

The quest for love seemed to underpin

everything that Shelley and Buzzcocks did. It seemed he was always falling in love, and it was always unrequited. On *Love Bites*, chucked out a mere six months after their debut, opening track *Real World* found him bemoaning, "I'm in love with somebody/ I wish somebody loved me, too." As with *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've?)*, the gender of the object of his affections remained cleverly undefined. Shelley did not come out as bisexual for years, but it was never hard to work out.

He was able to voice these sexual predilections more freely later in his career, in his solo, electronic work, but in the macho 1970s' world of punk had to settle for composing the brittle, non-specific nuggets of heart-rending pop of which Buzzcocks were the peerless masters. Forty years on, they sound no less wonderful. **IG**



VARIOUS ARTISTS GARY CROWLEY'S LOST 80s

DEMON

★★★★★

Following up his 2017 *Punk And New Wave* boxset, eternally boyish DJ Gary Crowley now unveils a 4CD/3LP set of lovingly remembered 80s oddities and rarities.

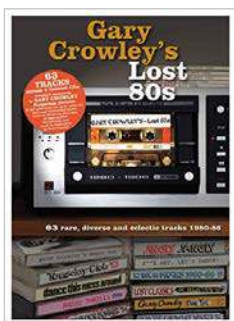
Its tracklist reflects that supremely eclectic decade. Titled 'Jingly Jangly', its first CD mixes jangle-pop as well-known as Aztec Camera's *Pillar To Post* with tender obscurities from Haircut 100, The Bluebells, Prefab Sprout, The Suede Crocodiles and Strawberry Switchblade.

The 'Fuck Art, Let's Dance!' CD2 casts its net far and wide, from Bow Wow Wow to Theatre Of Hate, The Redskins, Carmel, Jo Boxers, Spandau

and Depeche Mode, topped by The Associates' *18 Carat Love Affair*.

Crowley's 'Dance This Mess Around' CD3 surprisingly omits The B52's but does find space for club experimentalists of the time from Tom Tom Club to Grandmaster Flash, Whodini, Pigbag and 23 Skidoo.

The final '12 Inch Heaven' disc digs out Bananarama's rare Afro-hued debut *Aie A Mwana*, then collects extended mixes of Pete Shelley, Was (Not Was), Defunkt, Chic, Gang Of Four and Fun Boy Three. Like Crowley's 1980s radio show, it plays you anything and everything – and if you don't like a track, skip to the next one. **IG**



VARIOUS ARTISTS BIG GOLD DREAMS: A STORY OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENT MUSIC 1977-1989

CHERRY RED

★★★★★

How do you seek to impose a theme or pattern on a fertile decade of Scottish indie? The answer is, you don't – you just reflect everything, in all its ragged glory.

This ace 5CD compilation showcases a bewildering wealth of riches. There are first stirrings: *Dead Vandal*, a punky B-side before Johnny And The Self-Abusers became Simple Minds and the jangly *All The Boys Love Carrie* by Mike Scott's pre-Waterboys Another Pretty Face.

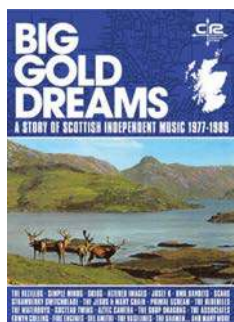
It's broadly arranged chronologically, so it swings from The Rezillos and The Skids into Altered Images and Thomas Leer. Fire Engines jolt and quiver through the album's title

track, while Paul Haig turns Sly & The Family Stone's *Running Away* into prime jangle-pop.

Alongside big names like Cocteau Twins, Aztec Camera and The Jesus And Mary Chain, there are curios –

Bobby Gillespie's hilariously bad vocal on Primal Scream's Byrds-copying debut, *All Fall Down* – and much treasure: Win, Momus, Shop Assistants, Lowlife's glorious *Hollow Gut*.

There are so many half-forgotten, long-neglected gems that loom back into view like old friends – The Motorcycle Boy! The Bachelor Pad! Dog Faced Hermans! And the best thing is that this compilation will have you haring off to discover them all over again. **IG**



BANANARAMA DRAMA/VIVA

CHERRY RED

★★★★★

After 1993's *Please Yourself* saw them dropped by London Records, Bananarama did not release an album in the UK until 2005, but the last knockings of the band's career to date were not without merit. The Europop-hued *Drama* yielded two Top 20 singles in the bubbly *Move In My Direction* and *Look On The Floor* (*Hypnotic Tango*) and is reissued now in a 3CD set, with a highlight being Marc Almond's Hi-NRG remix of *Venus*. Also out is a 2CD set of their underrated 2009 album *Viva*, with its none-more-camp electro cover of Fox's *S-S-Single Bed*. **IG**



SNOW PATROL WHEN IT'S ALL OVER WE STILL HAVE TO CLEAR UP

JEEPSTER

★★★★★

It's strange to reflect now that Snow Patrol were initially regarded as knock-kneed disciples of Belle & Sebastian. Their 2001 second album still had plenty of twee-pop murmurs such as *Batten Down The Hatch* but also found them transitioning towards more strident, radio-friendly soft-rock anthems such as *Last Ever Lone Gunman* and *One Night Is Not Enough*. It was a transformation that passed unnoticed until two years later, when along came *Final Straw* and *Run* – then the world's arenas beckoned. **IG**



ANGELIC UPSTARTS THE ALBUMS 1983-1991

CAPTAIN OII

★★★

Never exactly a complex musical concern, first-generation punks Angelic Upstarts specialised in worthy if crushingly obvious political messages. This raucous 6CD collection gathers up their albums from 1983's *Reason Why?* to 1992's "rare" *Bombed Out* but its copious bonus material also includes much of their more noteworthy early material, including anti-police-brutality 1977 debut single *The Murder Of Liddle Towers* and 1979 minor hit *Teenage Warning*, plus bawled covers of *White Riot* and *Ruby (Don't Take Your Love To Town)*. So, that's nice. **IG**



REO SPEEDWAGON CLASSIC YEARS 1978-1990

HEAR NO EVIL

★

With the exception of a couple of early 80s pomp-rock singles such as *Keep On Loving You* and *Take It On The Run*, Britain never really got American musical goliaths REO Speedwagon, and listening to this 9CD compilation, this can only be a source of national pride. It's horrible MOR rock and overwrought ballads a-go-go, but you have to grudgingly admire a band who managed to dream up two of the worst album titles of all time: 1978's *You Can Tune A Piano, But You Can't Tuna Fish*, and 1990's *The Earth, A Small Man, His Dog And A Chicken*. **IG**

ADAM WHITE MOTOWN: THE SOUND OF YOUNG AMERICA

THAMES & HUDSON



Originally published in 2016, Adam White's *Motown: The Sound Of Young America* was a lavishly illustrated, oversize tome of a book which instantly marked itself out as the definitive account of the legendary record label that shaped a generation.

Now in paperback, the book loses none of the magic that made it so great originally and actually benefits from its slightly more compact format, making it a more manageable read.

The book retains its exhaustive and superbly reproduced illustrations (promotion photos, record labels, gig flyers and



concert tickets), but they're an addition rather than a distraction to White's superbly researched and written text, which frequently throws up a revelation or two which will urge you to hear the songs through virgin ears – no small feat considering these songs have been ingrained in us over the past six decades.

White's passion for his subject emanates from every word as he tells the story of the label from its humble origins to the soundtrack of a generation, taking in its role in the civil rights movement and popularisation of black culture. **Mark Lindores**

TOM SHEEHAN R.E.M.: ATHENS GA – R.E.M. IN PHOTOGRAPHS 1984-2005

THE FLOOD GALLERY



Since opening in 2011, London's Flood Gallery has built a reputation as a distributor of rare artworks, posters and books by both new and established artists and photographers – one of the most successful of which is Tom Sheehan. After the success of books on The Cure and Paul Weller, the latest Sheehan collection compiles the results of a longstanding working relationship with R.E.M.

R.E.M.: Athens GA – R.E.M. In Photographs 1984-2005 traces the band's evolution from US college circuit alt-rockers to their mid-90s stint as the biggest group in the world. From quirky

shoots around their hometown in Athens, Georgia, messing about with bizarre props, to their later years as a sombre three-piece, Sheehan presents their complete history.

The highlights of the book

are those taken during the time that almost broke them – 1995's *Monster Tour*, with Sheehan's work more compelling than ever during that period. His portraits of a shaven-headed Michael Stipe

are among the best ever taken of the enigmatic frontman.

A document of one of music's finest bands, with the photographs reproduced to the highest quality, the book is every inch a collector's item. **ML**



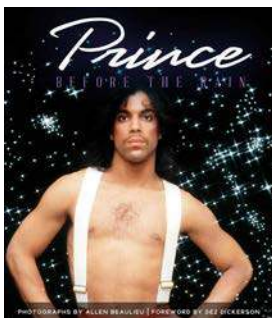
ALLEN BEAULIEU PRINCE: BEFORE THE RAIN

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESS



As someone who put as much effort into cultivating his image as he did with his prolific musical output, it is rare to see Prince in a setting which hasn't been carefully styled and pored over by his meticulous eye before being released to the world. As the lensman behind some of Prince's most iconic imagery, photographer and friend Allen Beaulieu does an incredible job of capturing the drive, energy and potent sexuality of the superstar-in-waiting prior to transcendence to global icon with *Purple Rain*.

Beaulieu's book *Prince: Before The Rain* is a unique glimpse into Prince's world before he sought refuge behind the gilded gates of his Paisley



Park complex. Beautifully produced and lovingly curated, the book comprises a mix of live and studio shots intimately portraying the artist on the cusp of superstardom.

While the accompanying text contributions from Dez Dickerson, Lisa Coleman, Bobby Z, Jim Walsh and Beaulieu himself prove insightful, giving background and context to the stunning imagery, it is the photographs that tell the biggest story. Documenting Prince's transition from doe-eyed disco kid, through the raw power of his sex-obsessed funkateer period of *Dirty Mind* to enigmatic androgyne of 1999, *Before The Rain* is a must-have for even the most casual fan. **ML**

NEIL TENNANT ONE HUNDRED LYRICS AND A POEM

FABER & FABER



While Pet Shop Boys have firmly established themselves as pop's elder statesmen over the past four decades, consistently delivering their unique brand of sophisticated pop (Intellectronica?) which is always in tune with current musical trends, it is undoubtedly their lyrics that set them apart from their peers – "Che Guevara and Debussy to a disco beat" indeed.

Covering a broad spectrum of subjects and emotions, from melancholic to euphoric, wry to heartbreakingly frank, the duo's lyrics have elevated them beyond their status of pop group to superb social commentators. Stripped of the electronic accompaniment that

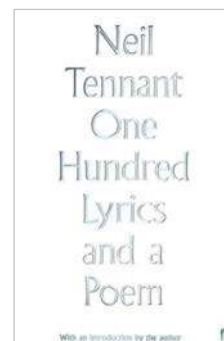
has made their discography one of the finest in the history of modern music, *One Hundred Lyrics And A Poem* highlights the stylish and elegant prose (though he asserts that these are songs and not poems)

that marks Neil Tennant out as one of his generation's greatest wordsmiths.

The collection comprises the lyrics to 100 Pet Shop Boys songs and arranges them alphabetically along with (sometimes too short) summaries of

what they are about.

Though it is impossible to read the lyrics without hearing the songs which soundtrack the past 30-plus years, the book is an enlightening glimpse behind the music. **ML**



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WED 23	BIRMINGHAM Symphony Hall
FRI 25	OXFORD New Theatre
SAT 26	BRIGHTON Centre
SUN 27	SOUTHEND Cliffs Pavilion
TUE 29	LONDON Royal Albert Hall
WED 30	BATH Forum

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SAT 02	LIVERPOOL Philharmonic
SUN 03	SALFORD The Lowry
TUE 05	NORTHAMPTON Derngate
WED 06	GUILDFORD G Live
SAT 09	NOTTINGHAM Royal Concert Hall
MON 11	BOURNEMOUTH Pavilion
TUE 12	CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange
WED 13	CARDIFF St David's Hall
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© Andrew Benge/Radiations

ALL SAINTS O2 INSTITUTE, BIRMINGHAM

3 DECEMBER 2018

★★★★★

"Tonight is about one thing and one thing only: have fun!" cries Shaznay, before appending the declaration with "...and take a run down memory lane!"

Twenty years since they broke through, Shaznay Lewis, Mel Blatt, and Appleton sisters Nicole and Natalie are enjoying something of a second wind. Or it could be their third, depending on how you view their career path. Regardless of the number, it's fair to say All Saints are presently doing alright: Take That support slots, a well-received new album, and a *Classic Pop* front cover (Issue 47, if you missed it).

There's a temptation to discuss the forty-something quartet's resurgence in terms of a newfound maturity. That may be the case when it comes to their attitude to the business of making music. However, the bulk of tonight's new tunes continue in a similar vein to those classic 90s/00s hits. With mid-paced groovers, bubbling electronics, four locked vocals, and shared leads, they don't stray too far from their nostalgic comfort zone. And that's very much a good thing – there are few here tonight praying for grime remixes, even those half the band's age.

Trading 90s baggy cargos for tight black trousers and chunky

heeled boots, the foursome's set opens strongly, sliding effortlessly between UK No.1 *Bootie Call*, newie *Three Four, One Strike* (from 2016's 'comeback' *Red Flag*) and *I Know Where It's At* ("our first single as a four-piece," says Mel).

While there's plenty of cheers for the nostalgic, William Orbit-produced *After All* and creeping clattering *No Issues*, it's their inspired Red Hot Chili Peppers cover, *Under The Bridge*, which earns the first frantic whoop of the night, the hit segueing neatly into the Mary Jane Girls' *All Night Long*. *Don't Look Over Your Shoulder*, complete with its Bennie And The Jets-styled verses, also gets the thumbs up, demonstrating a dynamic quality sometimes lacking elsewhere.

Occasionally with mic stands,

but generally roaming the stage, All Saints' choreography is more casual than athletic. While they all hit their marks, there's nonetheless a pleasant looseness, a relaxed approach, with gestures, shrugs, swoops, and leans all adding to their accessible charm. The chemistry between Nicole, Shaz and Mel seems strong, too, with Nic the glue, enjoying dancing larks with Mel and sharing jokes with Shaz. Natalie, however, rarely grins. Read into that what you like...

Although marching 'girl power' update *Glorious* feels more laborious than victorious (especially in the light of #MeToo), it all ends on a high, with a blissed-out, horn-infused *Pure Shores* followed by happy-clappy *Love Lasts Forever*, and *Never Ever*. All Saints are still doing all right. **Dave Freak**

SETLIST

- 1 Bootie Call
- 2 Three Four
- 3 One Strike
- 4 I Know Where It's At
- 5 After All
- 6 Rock Steady
- 7 One Woman Man
- 8 Chick Fit
- 9 Who Do You Love / No Issues

- 10 All Hooked Up / Alone / Take The Key
- 11 Under The Bridge
- 12 Don't Look Over Your Shoulder
- 13 Black Coffee
- 14 Glorious
- 15 Pure Shores

ENCORE

- 16 Love Lasts Forever
- 17 Never Ever

THE CARDIGANS EVENTIM APOLLO, HAMMERSMITH

7 DECEMBER 2018

★★★★★

There were malicious gremlins at work when Swede-pop veterans The Cardigans made a rare visit to Britain to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their best-selling album, *Gran Turismo*. Midway through this London show, the power failed and the music died. "That's never happened to us in 20-something years," singer Nina Persson protested with a puzzled half-smile.

Released in 1998, *Gran Turismo* was the coming-of-age album that gave these breezy Scandi lightweights a more discordant, electronic, anguished art-pop makeover. It heralded their latterday ABBA period, their embrace of Nordic Noir. Two decades later, the sullen mood swings of *Erase/Rewind*, the manic edge-of-panic urgency of *My Favourite Game*, and the soul-weary resignation of *Explode* all still deliver a hefty emotional kick in Hammersmith.

The bold choice of support act on this mini-tour is fellow Swede Jenny Wilson, whose 2018 album *Exorcism* was a brave synth-pop meditation on her own real experience of sexual assault. Half-disguised in a kind of futuristic bridal veil, Wilson prowls the stage alone, chanting obsessive-compulsive ruminations on shame, violation and vengeful rage over deceptively jaunty electro beats.

Having revisited *Gran Turismo* in full, The Cardigans return in more sparkly, colourful gear to play a second career-spanning set. The tone becomes softer and warmer, although Persson's sardonic torch singer persona still dominates, especially on the achingly bleak power ballads *Don't Blame Your Daughter* (*Diamonds*) and *Communication*.

Even the band's biggest hit, *Lovefool*, has a knowingly sarcastic spring in its step as Persson measures the swooningly seductive fantasy of romance against the hollow, disappointing reality. In the middle of the song, the power crashes again, but this time the audience seizes on the lyric and roars it right to the end.

They may have spent most of the last 15 years in semi-retirement, but The Cardigans still endure because these dark, damaged, deliciously sour songs never grow old. **Stephen Dalton**

© Reina/Avant.red

ADAM ANT ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON

20 DECEMBER 2018



AT 64, THE MAN BORN STUART LESLIE GODDARD SHOWS THAT AGE HARDLY MATTERS IF YOU STILL HAVE PUNK IN YOUR SOUL

The Roundhouse was the scene of a famously horrible show by Adam Ant and The Ants' original line-up where their frontman decided punk was losing its edge. Forty years on, Adam Ant is still getting his revenge on the venue, hosting an annual Christmas gang show with his own punk ethos front and centre.

It's not billed as such, but the two gigs here effectively repeat Adam's Singles tour – 13 singles, nine of the fantastically filthy B-sides which lurked beneath the Ants' pop glamour, and just two album tracks, both from *Kings Of The Wild Frontier*. It's gutting in that context that there's still no room for the mania of *Apollo 9*, but nobody gets everything they want for Christmas, do they?

There's a smattering of white-striped noses in the crowd here, but by now Adam has played enough concerts that

his audiences don't expect pop compromises. The hits are here, but their claws are out. When Adam invites fans to sing along at the end of *Prince Charming* and *Stand And Deliver*, all five of his band are on drums, the tribal belonging he sings about

in *Ants Invasion* made flesh. Even Adam's jacket, patterned like his *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* pirate garb but in black leather as if freshly purchased from punk boutique Sex, demonstrates how adeptly he now straddles his various incarnations.

The band specialise in intimidation but, having added fangs to *Room At The Top*, they're able to still keep the funk from Prince associate André Cymone's original 1990 production. Longstanding drummers Andy Woodard and Jola are perfectly attuned by now, while new guitarist AP Leach from Fields Of The Nephilim makes an excellent Marco Pirroni-style foil. They especially shine on a new skiffle arrangement of *Friend Or Foe*. Only a bludgeoning *Goody Two Shoes* in the encore has too much brutality and not enough refinement.

Now that it's six years since his *Blueblack Hussar* comeback album, you'd hope Adam has invited this gang into the studio for freshly-minted mischief. Adam gives no clues as to his future, striding off with no farewells at the end of the main set and the encore. He appears relaxed and confident, however, wielding an imaginary baseball bat to demonstrate how he's smashing it out of the park. It's a safe bet "same time next year" is on offer, and he'd be able to do a great job of it. He's overdue a full reissue campaign, with *Kings...* and *Dirk Wears White Sox* the only recent beneficiaries. The big question now is: Is the king ready to explore a fresh frontier? **John Earls**

SETLIST

- 1 Plastic Surgery
- 2 Dog Eat Dog
- 3 Vive Le Rock
- 4 It Doesn't Matter
- 5 Friend Or Foe
- 6 Antmusic
- 7 Beat My Guest
- 8 Ants Invasion
- 9 Killer In The Home
- 10 Lady
- 11 Fall-In
- 12 Room At The Top
- 13 Desperate But Not Serious

- 14 Cartrouble
- 15 Prince Charming
- 16 Zerox
- 17 Whip In My Valise
- 18 Strip
- 19 Puss 'N Boots
- 20 Kings Of The Wild Frontier
- 21 Christian D'Or
- 22 Stand And Deliver

Encore

- 23 Goody Two Shoes
- 24 Red Scab
- 25 Physical (You're So)



LILY ALLEN ASTRA CLUB, BERLIN

4 DECEMBER 2018

★★★★★

Despite her wayward past, Lily Allen endures. In the old days, of course, the tabloids ensured we knew about her difficulties, and she was anyway never backwards in coming forwards, except, perhaps, when under the influence. These days, though, she's taken the initiative, scattering details of her shortcomings throughout her recent autobiography and insisting they inspire *No Shame*, *Classic Pop's* Album Of The Year. So, where before she might have numbed her pain with substance abuse – as she puts it on *Trigger Bang*, "Everyone knows what cocaine does" – now she addresses her accountability with transparency, compassion and humour. She's all the better for it.

This candour's central to the sense of celebration that warms her audience this cold Berlin evening. She's been on stage mere minutes when, during opener *Come On Then*, she sings, "I'm a bad mother, I'm a bad wife", before turning to those who've made such accusations, highlighting their distance from her reality: "What exactly are you trying to prove/ When what you say's so far away from the truth?"

A feeling of release accompanies these words, and it derives from her willingness

to stand up and be counted. Whether strolling round insouciantly with her hand in her Burberry jumpsuit's pocket as she shares the sexual infidelities compiled for shaggy dog story *My One*, or wittily confessing her sins on *Everything To Feel Something* – "My glass is always half empty/ Someone fill it up for me" – these days she's proudly approachable. Pop star she might be, but she's also the girl next door.

Disappointingly, she lacks a full band, with just two multi-tasking musicians accompanying her, but still fills the room with charm as she draws heavily on current material, including faithful versions of the intimate *Three* and desperate *Family Man*. There's an efficient cover of Lykke Li's *Deep End*, a promising,

pun-heavy new track, *Party Line*, and hits from her catalogue, notably *Smile's* lilting reggae and the exultant *LDN*. At times she's dynamically limited, her colleagues frustratingly shackled to their backing tracks, but these stretches are usually short-lived, and always swiftly offset by a canny ear for a buoyant, irresistible melody.

The final encore of this cheerful 20-song set best captures her appeal, uniting Berliners with a sentiment familiar to anyone who's confronted injustice, personal or public. Like her songs, it's succinct, and its titular salute is delivered with typically sweet good humour: "Fuck you/ Fuck you very, very much." The whole crowd sings along, because Lily Allen speaks for us all. **Wyndham Wallace**

SETLIST

- 1 Come On Then
- 2 Waste
- 3 LDN
- 4 My One
- 5 What You Waiting For?
- 6 Knock 'Em Out
- 7 Smile
- 8 Party Line
- 9 Deep End
(Lykke Li cover)
- 10 Pushing Up Daisies

- 11 Three
- 12 Everything To
Feel Something
- 13 The Fear
- 14 Higher
- 15 Family Man
- 16 Who'd Have Known
- 17 Not Fair

Encore

- 18 Apples
- 19 Trigger Bang
- 20 Fuck You

PAUL HEATON & JACQUI ABBOTT

ROYAL ALBERT HALL,
LONDON

28 NOVEMBER 2018

★★★★★

With *The Last King Of Pop* the first compilation to demonstrate the depth of Paul Heaton's songwriting from The Housemartins onwards, a night of his various incarnations' singles was always going to be a winner.

Jacqui Abbott is relaxed enough to take her shoes off between songs, after Heaton strides onstage in a parka with the hurried air of a dad on an errand who's left the parking meter running. He soon chills out, though not before pointing out a handful of spaces near the stage: "Tonight is sold out, but there's some empty seats. That's austerity for you; Londoners can't afford the bus to get here."

Having made himself comfortable, Heaton shows off the unselfconscious dancing of someone who grew up on Northern Soul, his shimmy helping *I Gotta Praise* get the first huge cheer. If Heaton is no longer a Top 40 singles staple, his songs still hit home, with *She Got The Garden* just as big a singalong as *Rotterdam*.

Me And The Farmer is as breakneck as it was in 1987, while *Build* – "a song that's become more important than it was intended to be" – retains a choral beauty. Other than revealing her love of *I'm A Celebrity*, Abbott is serenely silent between songs, leaving Heaton to joke about his place in pop. Recalling The Beautiful South's final *Top Of The Pops* performance for *Manchester* in 2006, he admits: "We were massively too old. I looked at how young everyone else was and thought, 'You dirty old tramp.'"

Such an everyman attitude means it's easy to take Heaton for granted, but the warmth of his music makes for a celebratory mood. No wonder the pair have graduated to their first stadium shows this summer with two homecoming nights at Stockport County's ground.

The second encore ends on the so-far-unreleased *The Last King Of Pop*. A dubby romp similar to *A Little Time's* new arrangement, it's a self-deprecating, self-aggrandising statement. No need: by then, Heaton & Abbott have already proved their reign is richly deserved. **John Earls**



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CLASSIC POP MOMENTS

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No.49

KATE BUSH DEBUTS

17 FEBRUARY 1978

Kate Bush releases her debut album *The Kick Inside*. The LP followed hot on the heels of her chart-topping single *Wuthering Heights*, which introduced the singer-songwriter's prodigious talents to an astonished world and was the first time a female artist had reached

No.1 in the UK with a self-penned track. An early demo tape featuring 50 of Kate's songs was compiled by her family but turned down by various record companies before it came to the attention of David Gilmour. The Pink Floyd guitarist was impressed with what he heard and subsequently helped Kate put together a more professional-sounding three-track demo reel. It was produced by Gilmour's friend Andrew Powell who went on to helm Kate's first two studio albums. **Steve Harnell**

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